

# LOVECRAFT STUDIES 19/20

10th ANNIVERSARY



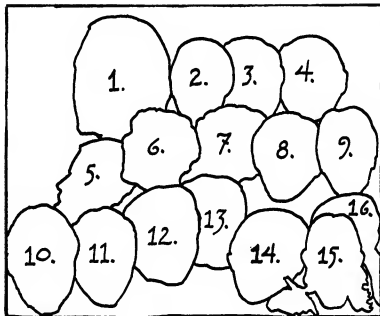
*Lovecraft Studies 19/20*

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On our cover are featured some of the contributors and behind-the-scenes people who have made the past ten years of *Lovecraft Studies* such a success:

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4. Alfred S. Michaud
5. Donald R. Burleson
6. S. T. Joshi
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10. Robert M. Price
11. Peter Cannon
12. Kenneth W. Faig, Jr.
13. J. Vernon Shea
14. David E. Schultz
15. Jason Eckhardt
16. Victoria Szatkowska



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Cover by Jason C. Eckhardt

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## Editorial

*Lovecraft Studies* was founded in 1979, just prior to the commencement of academic recognition of Lovecraft, which can be dated to the appearance of my anthology *H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism* in the summer of 1980. As that book (reviewed in *LS* #3 [Fall 1980]) by Donald R. Burleson opened the decade, so Peter Cannon's long-awaited Twayne study (reviewed by four scholars in *LS* #18 [Spring 1989]) closes it; and, as we approach Lovecraft's centennial in 1990, I like to think that *Lovecraft Studies* has quietly heralded this growing academic recognition. We have very far to go, of course, to see Lovecraft fully established academically, and there is now question whether such a thing--if, as so often happens, it means the death of his work as popular entertainment--is an unalloyed good. Probably the ideal state for Lovecraft--and, indeed, just about any other author--is for him to appeal to a wide variety of readers including the intelligent and discriminating; the academic world, which has much less influence on what actually gets read than it believes, can do with him as it likes. Some Lovecraft supporters are apprehensive of his wide popular appeal, fearing that his adulation by an occasionally loud cadre of the young and immature might detract from the appreciation of his literary merits; others are just as afraid that Lovecraft will become nothing but dissertation fodder. We need take neither fear very seriously in the short term: if established critics are repelled by the juvenile interest in Lovecraft, it is only a sign of their own lack of independent critical judgment; it is, indeed, this body of the young who will, for the foreseeable future, help significantly in keeping Lovecraft from being fossilised in academic journals.

Where have we come in the past decade of Lovecraft studies, and where are we going? The first question is, inevitably, easier to answer than the second. The review columns of *Lovecraft Studies* have charted the emergence, one by one, of landmark works: my anthology of criticism and bibliography; Burleson's *H. P. Lovecraft: A Critical Study*; my textually corrected editions of Lovecraft's fiction; Schultz's edition of the *Commonplace Book*; my translation of Lévy's *Lovecraft: A Study in the Fantastic*. The next year's issues shall no doubt review such things as Burleson's post-structuralist study, my philosophical analysis, the Lovecraft centennial anthology compiled by David E. Schultz and myself, and perhaps other things--including (if they materialise) the three documentary films about Lovecraft known to be in production. To be sure, Lovecraft's centennial will not be forgotten.

It will not be forgotten, but by how many will it be remembered? Perhaps numbers are not ultimately important, but I am a little concerned at the fact that serious Lovecraft studies (and *Lovecraft Studies*) are being carried on by a fairly small and unchanging group of scholars. The names are familiar--Burleson, Price, Murray, Schultz, Cannon, Mariconda, Eckhardt, myself. I would suspect that these individuals (all men, interestingly--a feminist view of Lovecraft is much needed) account for fully three-fourths of the contributions in *Lovecraft Studies*. In a sense, of course, this group is not entirely static, because each critic has over the years developed new theories and in the process perhaps repudiated older critical stances. The most spectacular such evolution is that of Donald R. Burleson, and it can be traced with precision in these pages from his early source study "Humour beneath Horror" (#2 [Spring 1980]) to myth criticism ("The Mythic Hero Archetype in 'The Dunwich Horror'", #4 [Spring 1981]) to the formalist "Lovecraft and Chiasmus, Chiasmus and Lovecraft" (#13 [Fall 1986]) to, finally, "The Terrible Old Man: A Deconstruction" (#15 [Fall 1987]), with, of course, other grace notes along the way. Burleson's article in the current issue does not signal a lapse back into conventional criticism but a transformation of conventional literary history through post-structuralism.

It also cannot be said that Lovecraft studies have come entirely under the control of a small clique: the stimulating work of Norman L. Gayford and Robert H. Waugh has been welcomed enthusiastically, and entirely

outside of *Lovecraft Studies* the lively *Crypt of Cthulhu* continues to publish vigorous work--by Mike Ashley, Darrell Schweitzer, its editor Robert M. Price, and others. The friendly rivalry of these two journals has been a distinctive feature of the Lovecraft criticism of the eighties.

Lovecraft has yet to be published in hardcover by a major commercial or academic press; will he every be? The question is not entirely a matter of mere recognition, for copyright considerations enter into it and will continue to do so well into the next century; I shall be happy if a major paperback firm issues Lovecraft in a form more in keeping with his now acknowledged literary status. Critical work on Lovecraft will no doubt continue--in many ways it is just beginning--and I trust that someone other than myself will wish to write a companion piece to my survey of Lovecraft criticism from 1971 to 1982; the ten years following this period have been and will be much the more exciting. And I think that all American Lovecraft critics owe it to themselves to explore the burgeoning realm of foreign Lovecraft criticism. France, Italy, and Germany in particular have produced strong work from perspectives wholly different from those of American scholars. Rottensteiner's anthology *Über H. P. Lovecraft* may be superior to my *Four Decades*; the first volume of Giuseppe Lippi's collected edition of Lovecraft's stories (noted briefly in this issue) may be the finest critical edition of Lovecraft ever published, rivalled perhaps only by the abortive French edition of Lovecraft's *Lettres* by Francis Lacassin. The two articles translated in this issue should supply a hint--but no more than a hint--of the fecundity of foreign work on Lovecraft.

I have no predictions how Lovecraft will be treated in the critical literature to come, although I can see any number of potential lines of development: his place in intellectual and cultural history; his place in weird fiction, both what came before and what followed; the analysis of his work through still more varied critical approaches; and--can we hope?--a new biography. More of his letters need to be published, his essays and poetry need to be brought back into print, memoirs by his friends need to be collected and their worth evaluated. There is plenty for all to do, and all who are capable of it will be encouraged. It is, surely, the least we can do for Lovecraft's inestimable enrichment of our lives.

--S. T. Joshi

## "Retrograde Anticipation":

Primitivism and Occultism in the French Response  
to Lovecraft 1953-1957

By Michel Meurger

Translated by S. T. Joshi

[Translation of an article first published in *Etudes Lovecraftiennes* No. 3 (1988) and No. 4 (1989).--Ed.]

In the course of my research at the Lovecraft Collection in the John Hay Library in Providence, I came to the conclusion that Lovecraft criticism was in a very embryonic state. Hence there is as yet no study dealing with Lovecraft's ethics or aesthetics.

There is, however, a question of some importance. Lovecraft's two theoretical works on the writing of "interplanetary" and "weird" fiction<sup>1</sup> both emphasise the value he placed on atmosphere: "Atmosphere, not action, is the thing to cultivate in the wonder story."<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, several anomalous concepts can be integrated into fiction in a distinctive way. Thus the central idea of "The Call of Cthulhu", the submerged continent, is borrowed from occultist literature. In a letter to Clark Ashton Smith, Lovecraft scarcely conceals his scorn for the "charlatans" who furnished him with such picturesque materials (cf. SL II.58).

Another example strikes me as still more significant. In 1934 Lovecraft wrote "The Shadow out of Time", based upon the central concept of dreams as a means of exploring a cosmic reality of incredible antiquity. Now in a letter to Duane Rimel, Lovecraft confessed that he did not at all believe in "hereditary memory". For him, the dreams of "strange Cyclopean cities" had a very banal explanation: "[They] usually refer back to forgotten bits of reading or pictures, more or less combined in a new way." Nevertheless, "for *fictional* purposes, it is quite all right to adopt such *false but attractive* explanations as reincarnation, hereditary memory, and so on. I do myself" (SL IV.413).

Such a method has its dangers. It requires a reader as entirely sceptical as Lovecraft, who can be frightened for the duration of the tale but who, when the book is closed, does not take all this for the gospel truth. Indeed, is it not the essence of Lovecraft's art to play upon a purely aesthetic execution of his tales? The subtle build-up of tension in his major stories, the anatomical precision of his depiction of the Great Old Ones, the countless learned citations provide even the most informed reader a strange sensation of credibility. In the absence of any biographical elucidation, cannot the same reader be led to interpret "The Dreams in the Witch House" as a revaluation of the concept of witchcraft, interpreted through Einstein? In "The Call of Cthulhu", cannot such phrases as "Theosophists have guessed at the awesome grandeur of the cosmic cycle wherein our world and human race form transient incidents" (DH 126) be read as a profession of faith in theosophy? Similarly, "The Shadow out of Time" and "The

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Abbreviations used in the text: DH = *The Dunwich Horror and Others* (1984); IIM = *The Harrar in the Museum and Other Revisions* (1989); MM = *At the Mountains of Madness and Other Novels* (1985); SL = *Selected Letters* (1965-76; 5 vols.).

1. "Some Notes on Interplanetary Fiction", in *Marginalio* (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1944), pp. 140-47; "Notes on the Writing of Weird Fiction", in *ibid.*, pp. 135-39.

2. "Some Notes on Interplanetary Fiction", p. 142.

"Whisperer in Darkness" could be understood as manifestoes supporting dream-knowledge, astral voyages, and the superiority of nocturnal life to waking life.

In a word, all these purely ornamental story elements, in which Lovecraft had no belief, could be judged as being the central point, an occultist lesson under a literary varnish, an eccentric lecture the more efficacious because of its stylistic brilliance. This is not what Lovecraft intended. To confuse writers, the "men of words", with "men of faith", is to produce a fabrication.<sup>3</sup>

### *The Awakening of Myths*

This is what happened, for example, in the fifties, at the time of Lovecraft's reception in France. Goya said: "The sleep of reason produces monsters." Specifically, in the troubled post-war period, monsters seemed to emerge from everywhere. Was it not Reason, and her daughter Science, that led to Hiroshima? On 14 February 1950 *Le Figaro* reprinted Einstein's warning: "Man finds himself placed today before the most terrible danger that has ever menaced him. . . . The poisoning of the atmosphere by radioactivity, and the consequent destruction of all life on earth, are now in the realm of technical possibility." Europeans camped in their ruined cities, crushed by such triumphs of technology as flying fortresses and V.2 missiles. Secret weapons, huge subterranean factories built by an enslaved people, shadow wars foretold dark ramifications for official history. "We don't know anything for certain, and anything is possible," proclaimed one soothsayer of the time.<sup>4</sup>

The uncertainty of the future propagated astrologers; with official science discredited, faith-healers made their fortune. Panic seized the countryfolk, and in hamlets people with the supposed evil-eye were denounced. The special envoy of *France-Soir* noted in 1956 that "around sixty trials for witchcraft occurred all year round before the tribunals of West Germany."<sup>5</sup> At Merlebach, France, in 1949, pillows were torn open to pick fortunes from the feathers. The panic spread to neighbouring villages. Monsters--the harvest of fear--everywhere showed the tip of their shaggy ears, on billboards, in illustrations in popular magazines, and in the pages of art journals--futuristic monsters, robots, and Martians from such American science fiction films as *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951) and *The Man from Planet X*; monsters of the Christian tradition such as hairy devils from the frescoes of the Chapel of Tende, restored by the Italians. Their grimaces appeared in magazines.<sup>6</sup> In 1952 the stone monsters of Bomarzo were discovered.<sup>7</sup> That same year, newspapers reported on an exhibition at Rome, "The Demoniac in Art". Five years later, Bordeaux in turn presented "Bosch, Goya, and the Fantastic". Prefacing the exhibition, the critic Marcel Brion detected, in the very heart of the modern world, the "awakening of myths".<sup>8</sup>

Myths--in particular archaic myths--represent a refuge against harsh present-day reality. What Sartre in 1948 criticised in the Surrealists, the wish "to escape awareness of oneself and, as a result, of one's situation in the world",<sup>9</sup> could be generalised for an entire segment of French intellectuals, writers, and artists who during the fifties plunged eagerly into altered states of consciousness, creating or celebrating "spontaneous art", crude art, savage art, and sought out the archaic and the primordial in tribal masks, naive painting, Gallic coins, and children's drawings. A critic in *France-Observateur* remarked that the artistic season 1953-54 could be termed "the renaissance of myths . . . We have once again, in our own way, become archaic."<sup>10</sup>

For the majority of myths allow only the primordial, according to Mircea Eliade. In a popular article, "Les Mythes du monde moderne" ["The Myths of the Modern World"], Eliade restricted his definition of myth to that of a "sacred history". Bygone myths survive to our day "secularised, degraded, camouflaged".<sup>11</sup> Eliade denied the existence of modern myths, maintaining that they lack "precedents". This static conception corresponded so well to the spirit of the times that it was accepted with enthusiasm. In effect, Eliade rejected the immense realm of the

3. Roger Caillois criticised Etienne for confusing "men of words" (writers) and "men of faith"; see *Arts*, 1 February 1952, p. 4.

4. Denis Saurat, *L'Atlantide et le règne des Géants* (Paris: Denoël, 1954), p. 10.

5. *La Tour St. Jacques*, May-June 1956, p. 158.

6. See *Arts*, 23 October 1952.

7. A. Pieyre de Mandiargues, "Monstres anonymes", *Arts*, 16 July 1952.

8. Catalogue of the Bordeaux exhibition (1957), p. 31.

9. *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (1948) (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), p. 221.

10. *France-Observateur*, 7 October 1954, pp. 18-19.

11. Mircea Eliade, "Les Mythes du monde moderne" (1953), rpt. in *Mythes, rêves et mystères* (Paris: Gallimard, 1957), p. 33.

profane imagination which has brought us the myths of aeronautics, astronautics, and in short all the vast imagination of science of which science fiction is a literary expression.<sup>12</sup>

The reception of American SF and of Lovecraft was conditioned by this archaizing tendency. The futuristic character of SF and the palaeontological mythology of Lovecraft were not perceived, or were interpreted as simple camouflages for archaic thought concealed under the guise of progress. The existence of flying saucers, a decisive social testimonial for the existence of a modern myth, was misinterpreted as proof of the vitality of an atemporal imagination.

It could be said that these archaizing tendencies emerged in the form of Primitivism.

Primitivism, which became an important factor in Western culture from the second half of the eighteenth century, is generally characterised by a nostalgia for antiquity, considered as a period of lost harmony. This belief engenders a reconciliation with cultures thought to have preserved some scraps of the original mentality—in particular, the art of tribal societies. Primitivism also searches out survivals in certain social classes (the peasantry), age groups such as children, or psychological states such as altered states of consciousness, momentary or permanent (madness). Occultism, especially since the second half of the nineteenth century, has claimed to be a means of recovering the lost wisdom of primeval man.

Lovecraft's work, removed from its context, might be thought to offer a legitimacy to a contemporary Primitivism; testimonials to this intention might be Lovecraft's ancient civilisations, very much more sophisticated than ours, or the place occupied by rituals and idols in his stories. This superficial view, however, cannot stand up to analysis. All these powerful civilisations at the dawn of time are *not human*. They are the work of extra-terrestrial creatures who came to colonise the earth. Their biological evolution, as well as their cultural successes, cannot be judged merely by the standards of terrestrial values. Their saga, having begun on faraway planets, is not finished with the death of the earth, since they will emigrate again to other planets. Beyond the fictional character of his conception, Lovecraft differs entirely from those who talk of the perfection of antiquity, such as Charroux or von Däniken: "When man's ancestors were primitive archaic mammals" (MM 59), the Old Ones, belonging to an already wise and ancient civilisation prior to their arrival on earth, built their antarcctic city. As for man, the latecomer, he serves sometimes as food, sometimes as an "amusing buffoon" (MM 65) for the Old Ones! Lovecraft cruelly derided the Judaeo-Christian myth of Adamic perfection. The first man was either a clown or a cutlet. The New England writer therefore stands at the antipodes from Primitivism.<sup>13</sup> As for rituals and bizarre cults, they in effect serve as a foil to the Lovecraftian hero, who is always an intellectual. In regard to the extra-terrestrials, S. T. Joshi has shown<sup>14</sup> that the Great Race, representing the summit of civilisation and without doubt the Lovecraftian ideal, has done away with all forms of religion. The Lovecraftian hero is above all a scholar, a professor like Armitage, opposed to the rustic Wilbur Whateley who celebrates his rituals on the standing stones in "The Dunwich Horror".

Lovecraft clearly condemned "Dionysiac" cultures. For him, a decadent society by its anti-intellectualism reverts to the obscurantism of savagery. This is very clearly seen in "The Mound", where Lovecraft passes the following judgment on the degenerate society of Tsath: "Now, as the neglect of science and intellect was dulling the critically analytical spirit, people were beginning to weave around the [Tulu-]metal once more the same fabric of awestruck superstition which had existed in primitive times" (HM 136). Beyond his changes in politics, Lovecraft maintained one constant: throughout his life he supported the Voltairean "man of culture" as opposed to Rousseau's "man of Nature".

However, in the absence of analysis of the *status* of the primitive and of ritual in Lovecraft's work, their simple *existence* might lead critics entirely astray. Lovecraft's work could in effect be interpreted as a retrograde odyssey. A considerable portion of French criticism of Lovecraft has been oriented from the beginning in this false direction. I have, indeed, no intention of criticising individuals, accusing those critics who have freely and honestly

12. I have emphasised this vitality and modernity of modern myth in a study of the aeronautic imagination in the United States in 1896-97. See Michel Meurger, "Zur Diskussion des Begriffs 'Modern Legends' am Beispiel der 'Airships' von 1896-1897", *Fabula: Zeitschrift für Erzählforschung* 26 (1985): 254-73.

13. Maurice Lévy does not seem to have noticed the non-human character of this original power, since he speaks of a "pure race" (?) in reference to extra-terrestrial races. "It is the task of mankind to recall and to attempt to recover by every means—dream, science, magic—the great models of primeval times" (Maurice Lévy, "Fascisme et fantastique, ou le cas Lovecraft", *Caliban* No. 7 [1970]). In fact, the only "great model" offered to man by the age of the Old Ones is that of a buffoon.

14. S. T. Joshi, "Lovecraft's Alien Civilisations: A Political Interpretation", in *Selected Papers on Lovecraft* (West Warwick, RI: Necronomicon Press, 1989), pp. 1-19.



chosen this direction with being "occultists" or "primitivists". It seems to me more profitable to bring to light the existence of a powerful occultist-primitivist trend *through* the discourse on Lovecraft.

The American author served as the pretext for the exposition of ideas latent in the French culture of the fifties. The imagined persona of Lovecraft brought together a great number of concepts scattered in post-war magazines and journals. One might ask if the date of the introduction of Lovecraft's work in France—1954—did not constitute an important stage in the study of certain conceptions now firmly established in French popular culture.

However, this reception did have a prehistory. In effect, before being translated, Lovecraft was presented to the public in the form of a journal of a literary coterie. This was the bulletin of the Surrealists, whose title, *Médium* (1952-55), is indicative. This bulletin expressed the primitivist-occultist tendencies of the Surrealist group. The Surrealists' interest in "primitive" societies corresponded to a rejection of rationalism and the idea of technological progress.

According to the theories of the time, contemporary "primitive thought" was believed to correspond to the intuitive, "magical" thought of early man. Frazer's *Golden Bough* (1890) offered to the Surrealists a model for primitive societies, emphasising the unconscious aspects of knowledge: dream as information, divination by means of altered states of consciousness. These societies also supplied an example of a stage of civilisation in which poets, artists, and magicians were still interchangeable. Primitive society forms an exact antithesis to modern Western society. To science, it opposes magic; to history, myth; to the poet who has been secularised and cast out from society, the poet-magician, oracle of the community. The Romantics had attempted to sacralise the function of the poet. The discovery of the ritual art of tribal societies had allowed the discovery of Victor Hugo's *Mages* in the islands of the Pacific or the Amerindians in their teepees. Oceanic objects had been presented from the first exhibition of the Surrealist gallery in 1926.<sup>15</sup> The Surrealists' sympathy with occultism stemmed from the fact that both represented a modern survival of primitive thought. In 1929, in *Documents*, Georges Bataille's journal devoted to dissident Surrealists, Michel Leiris pondered over the "primitivist mentality", noting that "the closest manifestation of that state of mind in the West [is] occultism".<sup>16</sup> Also in 1929, the critic and English scholar Denis Saurat (1890-1958), whose essays influenced André Breton, affirmed "the fundamental kinship of all these spirits: primitives, occultists, poets".<sup>17</sup>

In November 1953 two Surrealists presented Lovecraft to the readers of *Médium*. Gérard Legrand and Robert Benayoun appear to be the first French critics to examine Lovecraft's work, in an article titled "H.P.L. et la lune noire" ["H.P.L. and the Black Moon"].<sup>18</sup>

Benayoun gave tribute to the "recluse of Providence", "in the gigantic shadow of Gordon Pym and Valdemar, following Arthur Machen and Algernon Blackwood, reversing the course of evolution". He continued: "From the shores of sunken Mu, his displaced prose, forged upon the furnace of that alchemy he revered, proclaimed the *occult return of the Giants*. It is the essence of such vertiges to propagate themselves, as if by vibration, to the heart of later works: this is attested by the Sauk City group, represented among others by August Derleth, Robert Bloch, Hazel Heald, and Robert Howard, who have subsequently perpetuated the black legend of Cthulhu."

The French reader, entirely ignorant of this "Sauk City group", might have imagined some American followers of Surrealism. In fact, this group would be very difficult to reassemble, since Howard, for example, died in 1936. Sauk City is the location of Arkham House, founded by August Derleth (1909-1971). The "Sauk City group" is gathered together only in the pages of anthologies.

Gérard Legrand completes Benayoun's analysis by considering that "the greatness of Lovecraft rests on nothing but the creation of a *personal mythology* which ridicules modern history. Scattered, until his death, in popular magazines, this mythology gave evidence of *authentic occult knowledge* treated with great freedom. From unknown planets there descended upon the earth, well before man, the founders of a religion whose traces are still with us. It is striking that this point of departure *sheds light on scientific works certainly unknown to Lovecraft*, such as the glacial cosmogony of Hoerbiger, and some aspects of South American archaeology (cf. Denis Saurat, "L'Atlantide et le règne des Géants" in *Nouvelle Revue Française*, August 1953). Presuming and analysing an entire antediluvian literature, under their own direction, this impeccable writer and his group have given themselves the luxury of *verifying their mythology*. Rarely has so much rigour served for the evocation of the abyss."

15. See Evan Maurer, "Dada et Surréalisme" in *Le Primitivisme dans l'art du XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1987), p. 546.

16. Michel Leiris, "A propos du 'Musée des Sorciers'", *Documents* II (May 1929): 110.

17. Denis Saurat, *La Littérature et l'occultisme* (Paris: Rieder, 1929), pp. 71-72.

18. *Médium*, November 1953, p. 14.

Before even being known to the general public, Lovecraft was annexed by the Surrealists. But, in the entire absence of any knowledge of Lovecraft's *ethics*, Legrand and Benayoun invented a paper Lovecraft with the help of their interpretation based on Lovecraft's *aesthetics*. Lovecraft, the materialist, the sceptic, rejecting any scientific heterodoxy,<sup>19</sup> was now promoted to the rank of an occultist writer, professing "reverence" for alchemy. Benayoun endowed Lovecraft with the Surrealists' own interest in alchemy, as evidenced by their assistance in the lectures of René Alleau, which Breton helped publicise.<sup>20</sup> In fact, it was *chemistry* which fascinated Lovecraft in his childhood (the alchemical symbols that appear in some passages of *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* are simply for verisimilitude, and are not a matter of personal belief).

This is how the "recluse of Providence" was introduced into the realm of French criticism, in the company of the sailor Gordon Pym and the mesmerised Valdemar. Prior to the relationship between Poe and Lovecraft established by Jacques Bergier in his preface to the collection *La Couleur tombée du ciel* in 1954, Lovecraft was already after a fashion installed as his successor. The Lovecraft portrayed by *Médium* is a pure invention: he fulfils a very precise function, appearing as a double of Eliade and of René Alleau, allies of the Surrealists.

When, in Legrand's interpretation, Lovecraft's "personal mythology" "ridiculed modern history", the Providence writer found himself roped into Eliade's crusade against modern, profane history, in the name of myth, "sacred history". Likewise, for Benayoun, Lovecraft and Machen (cf. "The Novel of the White Powder") "reversed the course of evolution", and so escaped evolutionist determinism, just as alchemy in Alleau's interpretation is removed "from any narrowly evolutionary perspective", following Legrand.<sup>21</sup> Like his colleague, Poe's Valdemar, regressing to the primal slime, Lovecraft as seen by Benayoun and Legrand chose the dynamics of a return to origins. In this sense, he is the companion of Surrealist painters who, as Breton said in criticising modern science, "*deliberately chose the path of regression*".<sup>22</sup>

But the past as conceived in Lovecraft's "personal mythology" is subject to those resurgences into the present indicated by Eliade. And thus, for the two Surrealists, Lovecraft, having been cast out upon the Pacific which submerged the occultists' Mu, became the prophet who announced "the occult return of the Giants". The concept of primordial Giants was borrowed by Benayoun from an article by Denis Saurat, which a year later would become a book of the same title published by Denoël.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, before the publication of his work in French, Lovecraft appeared in *Médium* as a singular travesty, an occultist prophet. A "black" prophet, as the title of the article, "H.P.L. et la lune noire", declares, and also the phrase "the black legend of Cthulhu". Julien Gracq has emphasised the associations aroused by the word "black" in André Breton—"black novel, black magic, black museum"—and has judged that these manifest a "dim reference to sacrilege, to profanation".<sup>24</sup> In the case of Lovecraft, the expression "lune noire" deserves attention. The Black Moon, a waning moon, is represented in Greek religion by a chthonic divinity, Hecate, the goddess of witches and of black magic.<sup>25</sup> By association of Lovecraft and the Black Moon, the two authors sacralised his work, insisting upon its supposed relation with "accursed sciences".

The article in *Médium* had the same function as an altar in the Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme in 1947: Benayoun and Legrand, in championing Lovecraft's "personal myth", had opened the way to his future totemisation.

### **Lovecraft and the Great Martian Terror**

In the autumn of 1954 Denoël published two translations of Lovecraft, *La Couleur tombée du ciel* and *Dans l'abîme du temps*. As relates to the second volume in particular, the term "translation" ought to be replaced by "adaptation", since the version presented by Jacques Bergier is nothing but an abridgment—and a very dubious one

19. See his polemic against astrology in 1914, *Science versus Charlatanism*, ed. Scott Connors and S. T. Joshi (Madison, WI: Strange Co., 1979). In contrast, the Surrealists expressed sympathy for astrology (see the entry "Astrologie" in A. Biro and R. Passeron, *Dictionnaire général du Surréalisme* [Paris: PUF, 1982], pp. 38-39).

20. *Médium*, November 1952.

21. "H.P.L. et la lune noire." Gérard Legrand put forth Eliade as a cure for the "vertigo of history" (see *Médium*, November 1953, p. 15).

22. André Breton, "Science and art seem to me condemned to live in misunderstanding" (interview by A. Parinaud in *Arts*, 7 March 1952, p. 7).

23. See note 4.

24. Cited by Michel Carrouges, *Surréalisme et occultisme* (1947).

25. See André Coutin, *La Lune n'est pas morte* (Paris: Stock, 1969), pp. 64-65.

at that--of the original text. It would take thirty-four years for two Lovecraftians<sup>26</sup> to establish that fact; need we wait another thirty years for publishers to issue a *complete* edition for the French public?

I have shown in the first part of this study that during the prehistory of Lovecraft's reception in France, an important ideological current made use of the Rhode Island writer as a mouthpiece. Since November 1953, the article in *Médium* had established a certain number of shibboleths: Lovecraft the anti-modern, the apologist for myth against history, the occultist. One might suppose that with the availability of Lovecraft's actual prose beginning in 1954, the misunderstanding would dissipate. It did nothing of the kind. Nearly every critic would make Lovecraft into a Jean-Jacques Rousseau crossed with Carl Gustav Jung: the *fictional* character of his work would be ignored. Instead of presenting to the public Lovecraft the writer, with his literary devices, his acknowledged or unacknowledged borrowings, critics right from the beginning, under the influence of the *Zeitgeist*, would insist on the absolute sincerity of his utterances, on their spontaneous, raw character, the equivalent of Le Douanier Rousseau in painting and of Fateur Chevalier in architecture. Because dreams occupy pride of place in Lovecraft, critics on the one hand would infer the autonomy of Lovecraft's creativity (Lovecraft, according to them, drew upon his own fount of dreams in writing his tales--a very long-lived illusion<sup>27</sup>) and, on the other hand, influenced by the fashionable thought of Jung, these same critics would insist on the supra-individual nature of this dream-work: the dreams of the Providence writer were those of all humanity. Finally, conditioned by the primitivism and occultism of the fifties, critics would emphasise the archaism of the Lovecraftian corpus, that Key of Dreams for readers of Jung and Eliade. Many of them asserted its relations with occultist thought and denied completely its character as science fiction.

We will therefore see that the thesis maintained univocally today of Lovecraft as "fantaisiste" as deep ideological roots. Lovecraft the generator of myths is Lovecraft the anti-historian. Lovecraft the fantasist is Lovecraft the anti-rationalist, because in the fifties (as well as today) certain devotees of fantasy, influenced by psychoanalysis, readily assimilated literary fantasy with psychological fantasy, considering it a scarcely disguised expression of the unconscious life. Hence, in France, and this at least since the first theoretical writing on fantasy by Charles Nodier in 1830,<sup>28</sup> there existed a wilfully held confusion between lovers and defenders of fantasy. The first, mere gourmets, quite legitimately enjoyed fantasy *aesthetically*; the second, with Nodier himself as ally, became promoters, under the pretext of taste, of an *ethics* of fantasy, presented as antipodal to the rationalism of the Enlightenment. The genre of fantasy found itself, from the Romantics up to the Surrealists and beyond, invested with an *extra-literary* purpose by certain self-righteous individuals. This is not the place to present a history of this movement; suffice it to say that it underlay the tendentious interpretation of Lovecraft's stories. In 1954 Lovecraft was the "philosopher" of the day. His "imaginative life" (as Marcel Schwob used the term), fabricated by critics, made him a precursor of a trend of ideas which, in the fifties, sought for a sort of primitivist "revival". Lovecraft's work arrived at a particularly propitious time for an extra-literary reception. From September to October 1954 the press reported dozens of sightings of strange flying machines, and encounters with their pilots along deserted roads. It was the alarm for Flying Saucers. Some compared this to the "Great Terror of 1789",<sup>29</sup> others were concerned about its last impact on minds. In the *France-Observateur*, Alfred Sauvy, in an article titled "Soucoupes et ordre social" ["Saucers and the Social Order"], underscored the risks of a manipulation of panic: "A myth can be manipulated for

26. Joseph Altairac and myself, in the summer of 1988; see Joseph Altairac, "Lovecraft a-t-il été traduit?", *Encre*, Nos. 21/22. Papy's translation is a Pandora's box. This translator has performed the *tour de force* of adding a phrase not found in the original. Thus, in the "classic" description of Cthulhu we find in Papy: "Le corps évoquait celui d'un phoque" ["The body was reminiscent of a seal"] (*Dans l'abi me du temps*, p. 120). If the reader refers back to the Arkham House edition of Joshi (DII 134), he will find no parallel in the English text. Thus, when Cocteau said that Lovecraft gained by being translated into French, he spoke better than he knew! Logically enough, in the Lovecraft issue of the *Cahier de L'Herne* (1969), the illustrator Yak Rivais depicted Papy's Cthulhu: a peculiarly clawed seal, with an octopus head! In the passage where Lovecraft described Cthulhu's head as like that of a "squid" (DII 153), Papy invariably translated this as "octopus", showing at once his misunderstanding of biology and his contempt for Lovecraft's word-choice: the morphology of a squid is not that of an octopus; and surely the minimum of respect a translator can show to the original text is to pick up a dictionary. Would that Papy's inaccuracies were restricted to this!

27. This illusion takes refuge under the pretensions of psychological analysis. It is impeding Lovecraftians from undertaking research in the literary sources of Lovecraft's inspiration.

28. A significant portion of the work of Charles Nodier (1780- 1844) consists in opposing the universal man of the Enlightenment with man particularised by social survivals; Nodier defends the highlander against the townsman, the country against the city, dialect against the national language, orality against print; fantasy, which incorporates the Marvellous, is used by him as a weapon against philosophical scepticism.

29. See Albéric Varenne, "Le Secret des soucoupes", *Arts*, 20-26 October 1954, p. 1.

reactionary ends. . . . It is not a question solely of saucers, but of the entire equilibrium of society confronted by myth. The attitude of our generation seems on this point to differ from that of the past.<sup>30</sup>

In light of the "Great Martian Terror", many motifs in Lovecraft's stories acquire a reality and—if one takes no notice of their status as fiction—a new plausibility: French readers of *La Couleur tombée du ciel* in 1954 could relate to the withering of plant life caused by a strange meteorite, newspaper clippings, or rumours concerning the desiccation of leaves after the passing of a flying saucer. Photographs of "Venusian flying saucers", "writing from another planet" in the work of Georges Adamski (translated in 1954)—wasn't all this commonplace to Henry Akley?<sup>31</sup>

By a chronological coincidence, the flying saucer theme attached itself to the Lovecraftian corpus, supplying the motifs with an artificial plausibility. This dynamic functioned in two ways: the saucers appeared to justify the work of the Providence writer, being a practical illustration of it; inversely, Lovecraft seemed to supply an interpretative framework for unidentified flying machines, integrating them into his cosmogony. However, this coincidence would not lead critics to place Lovecraft in the genre of science fiction. Flying saucers and Lovecraft's stories were retained as examples illustrating the adaptability of fantasy to modernity and its metaphoric capacity to express a total reality, beyond the bounds of science. The impetus was given by Jacques Bergier in his preface to *La Couleur tombée du ciel*: from the beginning he refused to consider Lovecraft purely in a literary manner: "His cosmogony and his mythology frighten us because they are possible. Scientific methodology has shown that life already existed on our globe two billion, seven hundred million years ago! We are entirely ignorant of the nature of that life. . . ."<sup>32</sup>

According to Jacques Bergier, the horror in Lovecraft's work does not stem from literary artifice, but from the degree of hidden reality it is capable of expressing. From here it is only a step to the consideration of the New England author's work as a warning to mankind. This step was blithely taken by Louis Pauwels in an apocalyptic article: "For H. P. Lovecraft, intelligences from other planets are preparing to destroy the Earth."<sup>33</sup> It is hard to be more alarmist than this. In fact, Pauwels is making a marionette of Lovecraft, and the lugubrious tone is well in keeping of that of the future author of *Le Matin des magiciens* [*The Morning of the Magicians*]. According to Pauwels, Lovecraft's stories "have come singularly in time—in time for flying saucers, for preparations for interplanetary voyages, for scientific discoveries that will entirely shatter the 'terrestrial' conception of the universe".<sup>34</sup>

By "terrestrial conception" Pauwels means rationalism. The Surrealists rejected science *in toto*. Pauwels and Bergier accepted it selectively, retaining only those properties disturbing to common sense, or those aspects capable of poeticisation and metaphysical interpretation. Science's only benefit is to crack the edifice of rationalism: flying saucers, rockets, and quantum theory. While the true scientific attitude is to make things intelligible, to diffuse them, to introduce them gradually in order to avoid disturbance, the mountebank, scorning legitimate breakthroughs, seeks only to startle. Roger Caillois had already remarked in reference to the Surrealists: "As soon as there is a terrain where one can lose one's footing, these experts in vertigo immediately seek it—like mosquitoes on a marsh."<sup>35</sup>

Pauwels wanted to create fear. And since flying saucers were not sufficient, he summoned the Abominable Snowman to the rescue. In 1931, using his poetic licence, Lovecraft had turned this fabulous being into an extra-terrestrial. Later, under post-war primitivist tendencies, it was applied seriously and avidly to all "survivals" and living fossils; in 1953 the *Daily Mail* financed an expedition to the Himalayas to hunt down the Abominable Snowman. Just as the flying saucer panic made Lovecraft's themes "plausible", the hunt for this primitive man in the Himalayas during the fifties retrospectively conferred upon Lovecraft's citation in 1931 the weight of "evidence". Refusing to consider

30. A. Sauvy, "Soucoupes et ordre social", *France-Observateur* No. 234 (4 November 1954): 7-8.

31. See Desmond Leslie and Georges Adamski, *Flying Saucers Have Landed* (1953). French translation: *Les Soucoupes volantes ont atterri* (Paris: La Colombe, 1954).

32. *La Couleur tombée du ciel*, p. 10.

33. See *Carrefour*, 6 October 1954.

34. Ibid.

35. Roger Caillois, "L'Alternative: Naturphilosophie ou Wissenschaftslehre" in *Le Romantisme allemand*, ed. A. Beguin (1954), p. 133. The illusions of Pauwels and Bergier concerning an "advanced" chemistry that would rehabilitate alchemy were based on a conception of the world whose source was the "Romantic Science" criticised by Caillois in this article. Upon the publication of *Le Matin des magiciens*, T. Narcejac noted the authors' illusions concerning a "Science which would deliver us from Science, and restore to us our powers". On this point Narcejac concluded: "It is clear that science will remain science and never become some sort of mystical intuition. To hope that any methodology could transcend itself is to have no understanding of knowledge" (see *Fiction* No. 86 [January 1961]: 128).

Lovecraft's work from a fictional perspective, Pauwels presented Lovecraft as a believer in the Abominable Snowman and the latter as one of the Old Ones!—"These Old Ones still exist here on earth in small numbers; they are hidden, and the legend of the Abominable Snowman is not to be taken lightly."<sup>36</sup>

The Lovecraft conceived by Louis Pauwels was an autodidact of genius, possessing "a truly universal culture", being at once "archaeologist, historian, physicist, and biologist". "Scholars and historians" made humble pilgrimages to Providence in order to "ask questions of him". Conversely, Lovecraft was "a stranger to this world", having intuitively learnt the unknown history of mankind, and knowing "that something of this luminous past exists in our unconscious". Uniting in one harmonious step the two paths of knowledge, Lovecraft was, for Pauwels, both learned and inspired. A final characteristic allowed Pauwels to restore Lovecraft to the world of Romantic imagination where he supposedly belonged. "For Lovecraft, at once *hallucinating* and prodigiously *lucid*, voices from other planets speak to us, across time and space, in the darkness."<sup>37</sup>

Pauwels' Lovecraft benefited from the myth of Madness as superior understanding, as established by the Romantics and the Surrealists. In order to speak of Lovecraft's "voices", Pauwels employed a neo-spiritualist language, replacing the voices from beyond the grave with voices from outer space. What are these extra-terrestrial voices captured by the Providence mystic telling us? Their "frightful buzzing" shows us "that we are nothing" but the playthings of "the Old Ones and others".

Who is speaking here, Lovecraft or Pauwels? Lovecraft was convinced of the insignificance of the human race in the heart of an indifferent and empty cosmos. For Pauwels, on the other hand, who attributed to Lovecraft's *ethics* what only applies to his *aesthetics* (the Great Old Ones), the universe is crawling with hidden powers hostile to our species. If Lovecraft's conception of the world is *agnostic*, Pauwels' is here profoundly *gnostic*, inspired by occultism. When Pauwels, in the same article, attributes to Lovecraft the thought that we perhaps have "masters of whom we are ignorant", he is referring to the occultist belief in "Unknown Masters". Pauwels wishes to saddle Lovecraft with beliefs he shares and would develop later with his friend Bergier into a history manipulated behind the scenes by obscure forces. In effect it is a modernisation of the famous "conspiracy theory" by which royalist polemicists explained the French Revolution as a conspiracy of secret societies.<sup>38</sup> In Pauwels and Bergier, the Golden Dawn has replaced freemasonry. It occupies exactly the same function as a substitute for daemonic forces.

The status of Lovecraft's work in Pauwels and Bergier is determined by their postulates. They thought of him only in light of revelations they fancied they deciphered there—revelations of the existence of millennially ancient secret societies, of conspiracies against civilisation, and of the machinations of evil men. This interpretation is not at all incompatible with the knowledge they were able to gain on Lovecraft's rationalism, since, as we have seen, Lovecraft was for Pauwels a sort of medium.

Bergier's preface to *La Couleur tombée du ciel* is an excellent example of the strategic function of science in this author. Although making a formal concession to Lovecraft's rationalism ("Lovecraft has invented a new genre: the rationalist tale of horror"<sup>39</sup>) and the neo-scientific nature of his work ("it is the discoveries of science on which his power rests"), Bergier would nevertheless be able to carry out his restoration of science and of Lovecraft's work. Claiming to represent Lovecraft's language, it is really his own that he is inserting. Under the guarantee of "irrefutable scientific methods", he maintained that "life already existed in our globe two billion, seven hundred million years ago."

Bergier presents as "possible" and uses Lovecraft to vouch for his own hypothesis that intelligent beings preceded us two billion years ago, endowed with "astonishing powers". What in Lovecraft was literary fiction here becomes a conjecture legitimised by "science". And Bergier proceeds imperturbably: "Perhaps there exist even to this day gates opening on to other points of the space-time continuum, to far-away galaxies, to the past and the future; gates whose keys are in our unconscious."

The theme of parallel universes, of "gates" between the dimensions, of spatio-temporal voyages—all these themes contrived by the Providence author and employed as stage properties in "The Dunwich Horror" and "The Dreams in the Witch House"—are here presented by Bergier as a part of Lovecraft's *convictions*, his profession of faith. Very subtly, Bergier also suggests that the "keys" to these parallel universes are found in the "unconscious", and this allows him to fabricate an opposition between Lovecraft's *conscious* and rationalist intentions and his creativity, united with primitive times. In this preface Bergier only sketches in filigree what he would much later term "inspired

36. In *Combat*.

37. Pauwels (1954).

38. On this see J. M. Roberts, *La Mythologie des sociétés secrètes* (Paris: Payot, 1979).

39. Preface to *La Couleur tombée du ciel*, p. 10.

encyclopaedism",<sup>40</sup> the capacity of writers to become interpreters of messages from Great Galactic Entities or Unknown Masters. In opposition to the discursive knowledge of the Encyclopaedists, Bergier puts forth the intuitive knowledge of the mediums of his "inspired encyclopaedism".

In the preface to *La Couleur tombée du ciel*, Lovecraft is thus made to seem generally in accordance with the occulto-primitivist theories which, as we have seen, were being expressed in France in the fifties.

Whereas, on the discursive scheme, "we are entirely ignorant" of the forms of primitive life, Lovecraft is there to point out, according to Bergier, that the past is accessible to our unconscious, as well as the future, other realms, and other dimensions. There revelations would have been made not by but through Lovecraft. In 1976, in an interview, Bergier again affirmed that the Providence master in no way perceived "the forces which controlled him".<sup>41</sup>

The role of science in Pauwels and Bergier can only be understood as *strategic*, its very admission into the realm of analysis being repugnant to many critics of the fifties. For them, Lovecraft is par excellence a prophet of *Return*, of Archaism, hence of anti-science, and, logically, anti-science fiction. Thus, when Yvon Hecht gave tribute to Lovecraft in *Paris Normandie* in September 1954, it is as a "storyteller on the edge of SF". For Hecht, Lovecraft's stories "give forth a curious impression of calling upon the content of the unconscious, the most primitive stratum which delights obscurely in a vast anthropomorphic union of man and the earth, with its hybrid entities, declared diabolic by Christianity".<sup>42</sup>

Lovecraftian entities are thus, according to Yvon Hecht, "elemental beings", created on that level "which some term *occult*". One wonders whether the critic had in fact read, not the stories of Lovecraft, but those of Saki and Algernon Blackwood. For if elemental beings prick up their shaggy ears in "The Wendigo" and "The Music on the Hill", in "The Whisperer in Darkness" we find extra-terrestrials, in "The Dunwich Horror" inhabitants of other dimensions, in "The Shadow over Innsmouth" a parallel marine evolution: in these three latter stories, it is a case of beings without any supernatural background, and who exhibit none of the occult powers of elementals. "Undine", the charming elemental creature of La Motte-Fouqué, exhibits the power of infinite *metamorphoses*; the fish-men of Innsmouth, on the other hand, are subject to natural *mutations* like batrachians and seek to supplant us like the good Darwinian strugglers that they are: it is hard to find a vision farther from the fairyland of elementals. If the interpretation of Yvon Hecht is therefore entirely erroneous, it is no less indicative of the predominant occultism which perverted the reception of Lovecraft in 1954. This predominance led critics to interpret Lovecraft unilaterally as a "fantaisiste" by the denial of scientific culture and the literature it generated, science fiction.

In September 1954 Maurice Nadeau again warned us, in regard to Lovecraft's work: "This sorcery has no ties to science fiction." Like Pauwels, he emphasised those factors propitious to the reception of the New England writer: "In a time when those who have not seen flying saucers or flying cigars will soon constitute the exception, and when experts so serious as Mr Denis Saurat have proven the existence of a reign of giants prior to man and the founders of a civilisation in no way similar to ours, it can be thought that the limits of 'science' are receding day by day, or that *we are living amidst wonders*."<sup>43</sup> In this favourable context, the reading of Lovecraft therefore becomes a "spell" upon the reader's soul. "But happily, and until further enquiry, this spell is literary."<sup>44</sup>

This last phase alludes evidently to the preface to *La Couleur tombée du ciel*, where Bergier presented Lovecraft's "mythology" as "possible". Nadeau, on his part, refused to admit this potentiality of myth as belonging to a conjectural reality. But he is no less troubled, as is expressed by his "until further enquiry". According to Nadeau, the appearance of flying saucers and the "revelations" of Saurat on Unknown History could be interpreted in two entirely different ways: is it discursive knowledge that is increasing, demonstrating the reality of what we are accustomed consider fiction—extra-terrestrial vehicles and Cyclopean civilisations—or rather, is it not the "marvellous" which is becoming indistinguishable from the real? This second proposition corresponds to the hopes which Pauwels and Bergier placed in the reception of a modern science so troubling, so unable to be integrated by common sense, that it will paradoxically lead to a return to the "marvellous", the sensation that twentieth-century man is perhaps surrounded by more daemons and marvels than his ancestor of the Middle Ages.

40. Bergier's remarks as reported by Pauwels in *Blumroch l'Admirable* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), pp. 50-51.

41. Interview in *L'Oeil du Golem*, Autumn 1976, p. 32.

42. Yvon Hecht, "Salut à Lovecraft, conteur en marge de la science-fiction", *Paris Normandie*, 24 September 1954.

43. *Paris Normandie*, 24 September 1954. The reader may refer to an article by J. L. Buard, "Cinquantième de la mort de H. P. Lovecraft" (*Fantastik*, No. 30, pp. 40-41), for a useful chronology of Lovecraft's reception in France from 1954 to 1985.

44. Nadeau (1954).

Some have wanted to see in Lovecraft's work the model for this return. Thus Claude Ernoul.<sup>45</sup> This critic recognised from the beginning the existence of a "new mythology" that is presented as an "extension of consciousness". The myth of today is the reality of tomorrow: "The superman is the man of the future." "It is possible to claim up to our own time that the time is near when a man will no longer be distinguished from his myths, as science is integrating them with a prodigious rapidity." This phrase can be interpreted in two ways, entirely opposite: the first explication would consist in saying that Ernoul sees the approaching end of myth as *fiction*, since science is allowing only the conjectural to remain. A second interpretation would note, contrarily, that this integration of myth by science tends to obliterate the *distinction* between the imaginary and the real. In the course of his article Ernoul, as the progeny of Pauwels and Bergier, clearly shows that it is this second solution that he has chosen. For Ernoul, the extension of the "possible" has shattered the "barriers" between science and myth: "From this evolution there results a *presence* amongst us of a *fantasy* never before attained. It is constantly accessible to us in the form, for example, of 'flying saucers', whose most remarkable characteristic is *that they oscillate between fiction and reality*, malignly escaping our attempts to reduce them to the one or the other..." (664).

Let us note that previously Ernoul had remarked that the "new mythology" was being expressed through works of "scientific fiction", i.e. science fiction. He now speaks of "fantasy". This is a deliberate choice. For Ernoul, "scientific" fiction ought simply to become a *transition* to a return, pure and simple, to fantasy. Likewise, the function of modern myth is, for Ernoul, to serve as a reflexion for the reinitiation of ancient myth. Ernoul, like Eliade, is in fact only interested in ancient myth. For him, new myths and their literary expression in SF ought to function only as facilitating a return to ancient myths. It is this function which, according to him, will devolve upon the work of Lovecraft. "Witches and monsters are ordinary elements of myths. We have lost the habit of taking them seriously. But formerly we burned the one and chased the other. Historically, they still exist in us. Affectively also, although we are scarcely aware of it, unused as we are to communicating with our infancy which they haunt by means of traditional stories, and careful as we are not to let them *attack us through our primitive forms of thought* which can only trouble our actual life" (669).

For his purpose, Ernoul purports to believe in the survival of traditional tales of witchcraft. They had, however, virtually disappeared by the eve of the first world war.<sup>46</sup> A thirty-four-year-old Frenchman in 1954 had a greater chance of being lulled to sleep in his infancy by Jules Verne than by the legends of flying dragons and sabbaths.

We have, therefore, according to Ernoul, repressed these infantile fears. Hence Lovecraft "precisely chose to frighten us with witches and monsters. He attempted to overturn this mental barrier which is one of the strongest there is. He decided to *throw us back into our infancy*, into the most primitive forms of our thought" (669).

How? By Science, Ernoul replies, "for Lovecraft is indeed an author of *scientific fiction*. Since we claim nowadays to be impressed only by the truths of science (something he cared nothing about), *Lovecraft would break down the barriers which separate science from myth, and the latter will subsume the former entirely*. Thereupon witches and monsters will become for us unimpeachable truths..." (670).

Ernoul only grants Lovecraft the status of an author of SF so that he can efface the barriers between science and myth. Let us note in passing Ernoul's faith in the superior dynamism of myth. For why will it not be science which will subsume myth? Ernoul, too eager to uncover witches and monsters in Lovecraft, failed to ponder the *status* of these. In fact, the witch Keziah in "The Dreams in the Witch House" is not like her predecessors. Lovecraft has borrowed the figure of the traditional witch of New England and has included her in a theme of parallel universes, drawn from science fiction. A reading of "The Dreams in the Witch House" therefore does not throw us back into that infantile thought which Ernoul, following the Freud of *Totem and Taboo* (1913), assimilated quite falsely with "primitive thought". On the contrary, Lovecraft offers us something radically *new* and personal: an harmonious synthesis of varied elements, which can be called, for those tales belonging to the category of "The Dreams in the Witch House", a *cosmic regionalism*. In his article Ernoul indeed admits the presence of a science fiction element in the tales; he speaks of a "fourth dimension of space" and a "parallel marine biological evolution" (670), but considers these elements as mere *lures*, designed to make us swallow the bait of ancient myth. These SF themes in effect provide a modernist "credibility" to ancient myths, which can then return. "And that's the trick" (670).

Ernoul's vocabulary is not neutral. One more time, Lovecraft "the man of words" is confused with "the man of faith"--he becomes a sort of Jesuit of the imagination who devoted his life to the conversion of the profane world,

45. Claude Ernoul, "Lovecraft ou le mythe en révolution", *Les Lettres Nouvelles* No. 21 (November 1954): 664-71. Subsequent references to this article will appear in the text.

46. See Egen Weber, *La Fin des terroirs: La Modernisation de la France rurale (1870-1914)*, pp. 665-67.

under the banners of Saint Jung and Saint Eliade. How far this caricature is from the real Lovecraft, who believed neither in the devils of old-time mythology nor in the Old Ones of his own myths! Ernoul, under the handy term "myths", would confuse literary fiction and belief: when he cites these witches who were burned long ago, he places himself on the level of *belief*; when he makes allusion to Lovecraft's "witches", he is then on another level entirely, that of a *literary* trope. It is typical of all "mythophiles" to refuse to make a distinction between these two levels, as if the fact that a writer uses the theme of the Salem witches is equivalent to a resurgence of a belief in witches!

As for the dogma of the resurrection of ancient myth by acceptance of modern myth, Ernoul bases it upon the thesis of the survival of archaic myths in modern man's unconscious, an unproved and unprovable theory. We should also emphasise the role of science fiction for Ernoul: it is only an antechamber. This is a flagrant untruth. To take only the example of "The Shadow over Innsmouth", it is impossible to analyse this tale without being forced to refer continually to evolution, to Social Darwinist theories, to theories relating to degeneration. Far from being a mere ornament, as Ernoul seems to suggest, science fiction informs the entire tale. Of what I have called Lovecraft's cosmic regionalism, Ernoul understands, of course, only the regionalism, insisting on the retrogressive communities displayed by Lovecraft.<sup>47</sup> In accordance with the cultural climate of the fifties, Ernoul is content to pillage from our author what seems to him immediately reducible to primitivism: the isolated, traditional milieux, witchcraft, etc.; Lovecraft's originality, the localisation of the cosmic in the hills of New England, escapes Ernoul and other critics of the times entirely, because they are interested only in the traces of the human past.

Critics like Ernoul attribute to Lovecraft a Manichaeism which is in fact a simple projection of the French climate of the fifties. The image of a Lovecraft manipulating science fiction transforms him into a strategist of a cultural battle; his confiscated shade serves as a *guarantee* for a moral rearmament which takes refuge under the handy cloak of an aesthetic discourse.

For the most self-conscious apostles of a return to the past, the stakes are truly *ethical*. Let us hear the critic Michel Carrouges, in *Les Machines célibataires*: "With the twentieth century, the time has come to overthrow from top to bottom the movement that began in the eighteenth century with the Encyclopaedia. Rationalist criticism of myth should give way to *mythological criticism* of reason and myths."<sup>48</sup> This ambitious profession of faith at least has the merit of sincerity. The enemy is, as always, the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Rationalism emphasises doubt, the spirit of enquiry. Against it, one should utilise products of faith such as myths, thought to be the products of the unconscious. Thus, rationalist historic consciousness will be contrasted to the spiritualist collective unconscious. As Carrouges himself said in 1954, "the time has come." Let us note the parallelism with Pauwels' assertion that Lovecraft's stories "have come in time". For some people, it is time to turn back the clock. Carrouges puts into practise this "mythological criticism" in regard to several realms: Surrealism, flying saucers, science fiction in general, and Lovecraft in particular. His method is simple. It consists of interpreting the most resolutely modern products of the imagination as simple "camouflages" for archaic myths. Mircea Eliade had provided the theoretical foundation. Carrouges loses himself in the practise, very aware of the stakes. It's a matter of *supermythologising*, of turning a modern myth back into an archaic myth, thus precluding any socio-historical interpretation that might lead to a rupture of sacrosanct mythic *continuity*. For to relativise myth, to fix it in time and space, is to continue the work of the *philosophes*, those builders of historical consciousness. This demythologising was not what the revivers of spiritualism in the fifties wanted.

Prisoner of his archaizing postulates, Carrouges is incapable of restoring to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and of recognising the modernity of and influence of science upon the imagination. Science fiction, child of the profane world, constitutes a danger for the adepts of a return to sacred origins. They are forced generally to deny its modernity, lest their adversary come to the very centre of that dimension of the imagination which serves as their weapon against rationalism. A rationalist myth is unthinkable to them, because they antithetically assimilate rationalism to the historical consciousness, willfully ignoring the imagination of science, where Lovecraft must be placed.<sup>49</sup> Carrouges took very keen note of the danger, and attempted to diminish it in an article of 1955: it could be said, he says in reference to science fiction tales, that "the more their scientific content claims to anticipate the future, the more their psychological content is archaic."<sup>50</sup>

47. "They are an ideal terrain for the persistence of myths and for the concealment of disconcerting phenomena" (667).

48. *Les Machines célibataires*, new ed. (Paris, 1976), p. 12.

49. My work *Lake Monster Traditions: A Cross-Cultural Analysis* (London: Fortean Tones, 1989), presents a critique of these rationalist myths, in this case the myth of "living fossils", "dinosaurs", and others who "survive" in "lost worlds", whether terrestrial or aquatic.

50. Michel Carrouges, "Les Animaux célestes sont-ils plus raisonnables que nous?", *La Table Ronde*, January 1955, pp. 120-28.



Of course, as always, Carrouges is content with mere assertion in making this astounding theory. Let us extrapolate. Applied to scientific invention, this is the result: Leonardo da Vinci, when he designed the plans for his famous flying machine, was rationally in the future and irrationally in the past. Clement Ader and a pithecanthropoid were cohabiting in his brain. In fact, the science fiction writer is *of his own time*. His conjectures are based on inventions or ideas that have gained the attention of his contemporaries. Thus Jules Verne's *Nautilus*, created around 1867-68, might well have been derived from the submarine *Le Plongeur* of Bourgeois and Brun, who experimented with it in 1863. As for the psychology of the SF author, it is like that of any writer, including that of Mr Carrouges, itself dependent upon its time and milieu. Even those who like him aspire most to recover an original prerational mentality can succeed only at the cost of a perfectly artificial intellectual construction, since they deny their modernity with the mental apparatus of modernity. These prodigal sons of the Enlightenment regret the passing of candles because they have only known electricity.

In the year of his article on SF, Carrouges gave us another piece of bravura, "Lovecraft ou l'anticipation régressive" (1955). For Ernoult, Lovecraft was not an SF author save as a device. Ernoult defined his relation to that genre by the expression "le mythe en révolution". A strange revolution which takes us back into the past! He ought therefore to have spoken rather of a conservative revolution. This applies even more to Carrouges' interpretation of Lovecraft. His concept of a 'regressive anticipation' approaches that of Pauwels' and Bergier's 'anterior future'. For the adept of occultism, the true future is the past, with its civilisations of Giants. The only category of anticipation tolerated by the finical Carrouges is the sort that, like the crayfish, moves backwards. This is the customary method for those who, faced with clear thought, have recourse to the exorcist's holy water. During the great darkness of the spiritualist revival of the fifties, Carrouges' article on SF was a fireworks for primitivism and occultism. It compared the occasionally 'awkward' work of the Providence writer to "negro masks" which, void of the 'classical perfection of Greek statuary', nonetheless had "something which Greek statuary is incapable of giving".<sup>51</sup> Carrouges, in order to define Lovecraft's creativity, reached into the old argumentative arsenal of primitivism. He compared it to a production of tribal art, whose crudity gave it power, since that simplicity belonged to primitive aesthetics. From this perspective, Carrouges contrasted the expressiveness of African sculpture with the polished products of Greek statuary, that testimonial to classic genius. The "something" which, in his analysis, establishes the superiority of African art to classic Greek art is not of an aesthetic but an *ethical* order: it is the mythic message conveyed by African art. Analogously, in Lovecraft the "literary faults are only a ransom for *visionary* power". Traditionalist to the end, Carrouges' thought does not trouble to escape clichés—the spirituality of African art as opposed to the formalism of classic statuary. He no longer tries to ascertain whether the comparison of Lovecraft's work with negro masks is justified. It is not only false, but also quite comical for anyone who knows of Lovecraft's neoclassical tastes—recall the conclusion of Lovecraft's indictment of modern art and its "grotesque nightmares": "Whether the radicals admit it or not, our genuine stream of art and civilisation is still the ancient western one which took its general form in Greece and Rome."<sup>52</sup>

Nothing could better illustrate the total *misunderstanding* that constituted the reception of Lovecraft in France during the fifties. Lovecraft, who in one of his letters scorned African art and granted it the single success of masks—then very much in favour amongst American modernists—now finds his work assimilated to that creativity which he refused to place very high on the level of aesthetics! It is the supreme irony of the primitivist interpretation of Lovecraft, which has had the force of law, of attributing to Lovecraft's *convictions* everything that he stigmatised metaphorically in his writings: creativity and primitive rituals, witchcraft and prerational mentality. Lovecraft has been *confiscated* by an intellectual coterie that has attributed its message to him.

For Carrouges, Lovecraft the "visionary" is clearly distinguished from those "impoverished authors of Science Fiction" by the fact that he "believes with all his soul and all his mind in what he evokes". Once again the man of words is confused with the man of faith. Carrouges' Lovecraft is a visionary in the proper sense, in that he gives himself up to his inner daemons by his haunted, chaotic creativity, ill-made like a "negro mask", a writer who was "troubled like a man who comes out of a haunted house". Carrouges compares "The Dreams in the Witch House" to the expressionist facades of Murnau's film *Nosferatu* (1922), inspired by Bram Stoker's *Dracula*: "It is no accident that the story of *Nosferatu* is cited here. For the fundamental theme of the eight stories contained in the two volumes that have just been published is *haunting by vampires*" (73). The reader of this passage, stunned, turns to the books, asking how he could have missed Cthulhu's long teeth, or how the Great Race could have forgotten their red and black capes. If

51. Michel Carrouges, "Lovecraft ou l'anticipation régressive", *Le Monde Nouveau* No. 86 (February 1955): 71-76. Subsequent references to this article will appear in the text.

52. Lovecraft, "Heritage or Modernism: Common Sense in Art Forms", in *Marginalia* (1944), p. 173.

the obliteration with infant blood in "The Dreams in the Witch House" be left aside, hemoglobin does not flow in torrents in Lovecraft. But for Carrouges, having associated with the Surrealists, and *Nosferatu* being for them a cult film,<sup>53</sup> "vampires" is simply an approximation for "revenants". He continued imperturbably: "It can be seen immediately that we are at the antipodes of Anticipation and science fiction. . . . What Lovecraft offers is very precisely stories of revenants" (73).

Spectres play hide-and-seek through Carrouges' essays. In 1950 Surrealist revenants made him pass white nights. Two years later he asked lugubriously in reference to flying saucers: "La Planète est-elle hantée?" ["Is the Planet Haunted?"]<sup>54</sup> In 1955 Lovecraft's work provided the solution: in Lovecraft "haunting" would attain an unequalled profusion, it "overtaken towns, continents, and even the entire planet". The Lovecraftian not daunted by Carrouges' "vampires" now asks in what old trunk in Arkham these "revenants" could hide. To be sure, Lovecraft has written a tale of ghosts, "The Shunned House" (1924), and highly unorthodox spectres make an appearance in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (1927). But these are very isolated cases. One cannot generalise about an entire oeuvre from them, and even these instances are not likely to please a primitivist. For Lovecraft, the unabashed rationalist, has introduced science in these stories: the very tangible spectre of "The Shunned House" is liquefied through carboys of acid by a ghostbuster with a gas-mask, while the revenants of *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* are the laboratory creations of a chemistry which is, to be sure, occult, but chemistry all the same; they are not transcendent beings. Lovecraft has not forgotten the little chemistry set which his aunt Lillian gave him in 1899. Even when he writes of ghosts, he is suspicious of airy beings of pure spirit: in his work, spectres are not exorcised, they are liquefied by chemical manipulation. But Carrouges makes no allusion to these two texts when he speaks of these "revenants". His interpretation alludes to extra-terrestrial monsters, the Old Ones; for him, in effect, "they are indeed revenants, they are the ancient occupants of the terrestrial realm who leave their places of non-repose to trouble the living, to chase them, if possible" (76).

With so elastic a definition of the word "revenant", I propose to offer to Carrouges, the lover of archaism, the revenants of the Cretaceous age—all those dinosaurs of the pulps hatched from eggs accidentally warmed by a volcanic eruption. For these iguanadons and their scaly brothers are indeed the "ancient occupants of the terrestrial realm". Lovecraft had, however, insisted on the *lethargy* and not the functional *death* of the Old Ones. But Carrouges' prejudice dissuaded him from clinging to these futilities. For him, Lovecraft's monsters emerge from an "occultist" (75) conception of the world, and the Providence writer who, in his correspondence, ridiculed occultist "charlatans" finds himself enthroned by Carrouges as "the greatest theosophic storyteller of our time". But it is a "black theosophy", covering the powers of darkness, "as in certain gnostic doctrines" (76). Here again is the "Black Moon" of the Surrealists of *Médium*! Lovecraft the gnostic must not be confused, for Carrouges, with a writer of anticipation: "But it could be said, if one wishes, that it is a matter of *regressive anticipations*, in the sense that the revenants act directly from the depths of the ages, as in 'the shadow out of time', in order to bring our souls under their influence, and to place them in their school" (76).

Once again, Carrouges interprets by way of fantasy what in Lovecraft is science fiction: the members of the Great Race are not the dead but voyagers in time, and if they wish to substitute their minds with ours, it is not to bring about some "Great Return", but for purely self-interested motives of Darwinian survival. Providence is not Coblenz. The Whiteleys are not the leaders of a reactionary movement against the modern world to reestablish the "ancient regime" prior to the Enlightenment.

Only one thing is missing from this portrait—the "Recluse of Providence". The critic Michel Deutsch would supply it. In 1957 Deutsch showered praise on Lovecraft, the "accursed writer", whose "curse" was to have been born in the United States, a too "realist" country. This judgment is an echo of the myth of Poe propounded by Baudelaire, the curse of a poet born in a materialist country, a "vast prison".<sup>55</sup> It is no accident that journalists saw Lovecraft as "a new Edgar Poe" (*Paris Match*). The cliché of the accursed writer, misunderstood and ignored by his country, makes it possible to find fault with the modern "materialist" world through the United States. If so great a champion of primitivism as Claude Lévi-Strauss believed that the essence of "the American soul" is a "fierce sociability", inculcated from infancy,<sup>56</sup> then Lovecraft is anti-American and therefore anti-materialist par excellence, the eremite

53. See Breton's dream about *Nosferatu* in *Vases communicants* (1952) (Paris: Gallimard, 1955), pp. 36-37.

54. *Arts*, 16 October 1952.

55. Jacques Cabau has remarked that Poe's success in France corresponded to the "idealist and authoritarian reaction" of the second half of the nineteenth century. Baudelaire, his translator, saw in him a "mage": "It is as a philosopher, much more than as a poet or storyteller, that he offered Poe to France" (*Edgar Poe par lui-même* [Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1961], p. 108).

56. Claude Lévi-Strauss, "La Technique du bonheur aux U.S.A.", *L'Age d'Or* No. 1 (October 1957): 82.

sage who listened only to the voices of solitude and the past. For Deutsch, Lovecraft's "sorcery" is precisely in serving as a "relay" to "the past and [to] the primitive, sleeping at the edge of consciousness". For "in the hygienic world that has built our civilisation . . . it would appear that we have dispensed once and for all with the irrational. In reality, the primitive is not as dead in us as we proclaim it."<sup>57</sup>

Like the majority of critics we have examined, Michel Deutsch takes Lovecraft's literary work to be a confession. If Lovecraft has been able to become a "creator of myths", it is because he "believed in the reality of the myths he expressed" (257). As with Ernoul and Carrouges, Lovecraft's work is the royal path toward the recovery of primitive thought: "That intuitive and logical reflexion which, in the very heart of the twentieth century, was able to organise these artificial mythologies reunites the dreams through which humanity at its dawn sketched its fantastic cosmogonies" (265). For Deutsch, Lovecraft's prose in itself, opposed to millennia of civilisation, reawakens primal sensations: "The ancestral anguish which two thousand years of civilisation have eroded finds in the maladroit sensibility of this author a singular resonance" (265).

We must conclude. All the critics we have studied insist--with the exception of Maurice Nadeau--on the *extra-literary* nature of Lovecraft's work, on its value as a confession. They have endowed it with a cognitive value for a primitive prerational mentality. These critics therefore insist on the positively *regressive* nature of Lovecraft's imagination. Michel Carrouges dwells upon the "camouflage" nature of the Old Ones, being disguises for archaic mythical figures. This ideological constellation would furnish the dogmas of belief for lovers of Lovecraft. In his history of science fiction, the critic Jacques Van Herp would speak in 1975, in regard to Lovecraft, of "mythological science fiction", identifying the Great Old Ones with the "devils of Hieronymus Bosch", and the fish-men of Insmouth with "gargoyles".<sup>58</sup> But Van Herp's "devils" are cousins to Carrouges' "vampires": they simply demonstrate these two authors' fascination with fantasy, and their inability to recognise science fiction themes when these are not heavily seasoned with technology.

In 1970 Maurice Lévy examined the "case of Lovecraft". For Carrouges, Lovecraft's work was a perfect example of "regressive anticipation". Fifteen years later Lévy also concluded that Lovecraft "could only imagine backwards".<sup>59</sup> "While for the utopian or the science fiction author perfection is most often situated in an indeterminate but far-off future, Lovecraft placed it at the very beginning of history. Knowledge was at the beginning. Then man arrived, and the race degenerated."<sup>60</sup> Knowledge, yes, but whose? I have already shown in the first part of this study that Lévy's fundamental error consists in failing to take note of the *non-human* nature of the archaic civilisations described by Lovecraft. Primitivism certainly places primordial knowledge in an Eden of Origins. But Lovecraft is very careful to specify that his extra-terrestrials were not born on the earth. He speaks of "the coming of those star-headed things to the nascent, lifeless earth out of cosmic space" (MM 61). Therefore their stay on our planet is a *stage* in their evolution. Thus the apogee of their civilisation on the earth is only a *relative* moment in their entire cosmic epic. Their perfection, or rather the apogee of their terrestrial colony, is therefore in no way situated by Lovecraft at their origin. Conversely, how does this relate to our species? Where does Lovecraft say that *humanity* was perfect at the beginning? Degeneration is for him a *biological* factor, not the result of the "forgetting" of "primordial knowledge". It is Lévy who, following the trend of the fifties, endows Lovecraft with occultist and primitivist presuppositions that are not his. For Lévy, the history of humanity according to Lovecraft is a positive "return" to these "beginnings": the "act" of fantasy consists essentially, in "The Shadow out of Time" and *At the Mountains of Madness*, for example, in recovering the traces of these primordial--i.e. *exemplary*--civilisations, and in resuming relations with these fabulous times, when the "Great Old Ones" and the "Great Race" shared the earth.<sup>61</sup>

We have seen that for French critics, Lovecraft was the man who advocated a return to origins. It seems that here again Maurice Lévy feels the effects of these influences. One more time, where do we read in Lovecraft that humanity aspires to return to the era of the Old Ones? In this case, it would return not to "perfection" but to the status of a jest or an "amusing buffoon". And let us note that at that moment the Old Ones themselves were also entering

57. Michel Deutsch, "Lovecraft ou la mythologie", *Esprit* No. 273 (September 1957): 265. Subsequent references to this article will appear in the text.

58. Jacques Van Herp, *Panorama de la science-fiction* (Verviers: Marabout, 1973), p. 245.

59. Maurice Lévy, "Fascine et fantastique, ou le cas Lovecraft", *Caliban* No. 7 (1970): 77.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 77. Lévy is himself under the illusion that Lovecraft's work is a confession of psychological fantasies when he claims that the quality of Lovecraft's writing is due to its "oneiric quality" (*ibid.*, p. 78).

into a decadence.<sup>62</sup> As for what triggered the decision to unearth these buried extra-terrestrial civilisations, it is not the "act of fantasy" (?) but archaeological and palaeontological curiosity, in *At the Mountains of Madness* and "The Shadow out of Time"; in the latter tale there is also the narrator's desire to discover the truth of what his dreams reveal to him. There is no preoccupation in "resuming relations with fabulous times" in any of this. Let us add that the worshippers of the Old Ones, those who truly boast of maintaining this famous continuity with the origins of humanity, are described by Lovecraft as "men of a very low, mixed-blooded, and mentally aberrant type" (DH 139), i.e. Lovecraft's racial bugbears, and therefore certainly not the bearers of any "revivalist" ideal on the part of their creator. Maurice Lévy seems to me to have neglected an important source of Lovecraft's ideology: his Social Darwinism, which carries the American author truly to the antipodes of the primitivist quest for the "perfection" of a single time and a single place. Lovecraft was nothing but a *relativist* for whom man was neither the first nor the last word in creation. He illustrates this metaphorically in "The Shadow out of Time", remarking: "After man there would be the mighty beetle civilisation . . ." (DH 396).

The *cosmic* perspective of Lovecraft, including his detachment from anthropocentrism, excludes any primitivism. It does not privilege any form of universal life, each being subject to the same rhythm of birth, growth, apogee, and decline. The law of this milieu is Darwinian competition, the interminable struggles between the Old Ones and other extra-terrestrial colonists being an example. In contrast to the static ideology of primitivism which "idealises" perfection, Lovecraft put forth evolutionary dynamism.

At the end of this long voyage through Lovecraft's reception in France, it seems possible to form a rule of conduct to guide subsequent studies of Lovecraft. One must first of all very carefully separate aesthetics and ethics, not taking old Castro as the mouthpiece for Lovecraft's philosophy, for example. One must also, in order to avoid the primitivist trap, restore to science its fundamental place in Lovecraft's ethics: a number of stories of Lovecraft's maturity ought to be reintegrated into the literary genre to which they belong, *science fiction*.

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62. See MM 65: "It interested us to see in some of the *very last* and most *decadent* sculptures a shambling primitive mammal, used sometimes for food and sometimes as an amusing buffoon by the land dwellers, whose vaguely simian foreshadowings were unmistakable." Lévy's original error is in interpreting stories such as *At the Mountains of Madness* or "The Shadow out of Time" as "fantasy". In fact, when writing them Lovecraft was placing himself quite simply in a trend of American SF in the thirties, that of *Palaeontology Fiction*, one of whose masterworks is *Before the Dawn* (1934) by John Teane, which depicts the life of a Tyrannosaurus Rex. Prehistoric fiction implies a use of ideas as scientific as a tale of the future. To imagine the past is not to think "backwards" in the ethical sense that Lévy attributes to Lovecraft. And the Palaeozoic age is not Eden.

## *The Subversion of Sense in "The Colour out of Space"*

By Steven J. Mariconda

H. P. Lovecraft's "The Colour out of Space" (1927) is rich in subtle contradictions that enforce its theme. A colour is not a colour. A messenger becomes, instead, a message, but later is a messenger again. A forest is said to be dark, though it glows at night. An object that is said to be large is described as small a few sentences later. The seriousness of tone is interrupted by grotesque humour. These contradictions are not an indication of careless writing--indeed, Lovecraft's description of the story as an "atmospheric study"<sup>1</sup> shows that he spent even more than his usual extreme care with the style. Instead, they help convey Lovecraft's theme of the apparent violation of natural law. The motif of opposition strengthens the overthrow of logic, the subversion of sense, that takes place in the story. Nothing may be taken for granted, not even the simplest of statements, in a universe where chaos is the only given.

The opening paragraph sets the tone and begins to establish the motif of opposition--hills and vales, natural and man-made, temporary and permanent:

West of Arkham the hills rise wild, and there are valleys with deep woods that no axe has ever cut. There are dark narrow glens where the trees slope fantastically, and where thin brooklets trickle without ever having caught the glint of sunlight. On the gentle slopes there are farms, ancient and rocky, with squat, moss-coated cottages brooding eternally over old New England secrets in the lee of great ledges; but these are all vacant now, the wide chimneys crumbling and the shingled sides bulging perilously beneath low gambrel roofs. [DH 53]

After that of "The Call of Cthulhu" (1926), this is Lovecraft's most famous opening paragraph. In contrast, this paragraph is not exposition but description. Instead of a discourse on the problems of knowledge, we have an ostensibly straightforward depiction of scenery. But it is evident--if only from deft use of sonorant consonantal sounds (the l, w and r)--that this paragraph is the more verbally controlled of the two. In the first sentence, a compound, Lovecraft uses syntax in onomatopoeia. The sentence reads like that which it is describing--the first section abruptly "peaks" with the doubled "i" in "risc wild", then gradually descends in the longer second part to the final short "u" in "cut".

The verb forms of the paragraph, reiterated in parallel, establish a temporal stasis: there are valleys, there are dark narrow glens, there are farms. But the apparent timelessness of the farms is immediately contravened by the second half of the last sentence, another compound. The farms, though first presented as "ancient" and "eternal", are in fact crumbling. This reversal is characteristic of the entire story, in which opposition is used to signify the defiance of rationality and the violation of natural law.

Over the course of the story this contravention is taken even further--it is not merely the man-made objects that are crumbling, but the very fabric of the seemingly ageless hills and valleys themselves. This is foreshadowed in the fifth paragraph, where amid more landscape description the narrator states: "Upon everything was a haze of restlessness and oppression . . . as if some element of perspective or chiaroscuro were awry" [DH 54]. This

1. Lovecraft to Clark Ashton Smith, 12 May 1927 (SL II.127).

"restlessness"--which contrasts with the stasis conveyed in the opening paragraph--is the meteorite's invasion of all organic life in the vicinity, and is later reflected in the movement of treetops when there is no wind and even the figurative "restlessness . . . in the air" [DH 62] at the Gardner place.

The use of the word "chiaroscuro" begs for comment, since it is uncommon and occurs nowhere else in Lovecraft. Denoting the use of light and dark elements in pictorial art, it is derived from the Italian *chiaro* (light) and *oscuro* (dark), in turn derived from the Latin *clarus* (clear) and *obscurus* (obscure). We again see the disparity which Lovecraft plays on throughout the tale. Despite the fact that the woods around the ruins of the Gardner farm are said to shine at night [DH 81], the area is still described in terms such as "dark ancient valleys" [DH 56] and "dark realm" [DH 80].

Lovecraft's word choice as he describes the behavior of the meteorite in the scientists' laboratory also encourages the impression of conflict. First, "the wise men talked of the strange stone's affinity for silicon" [DH 58]. "Affinity", used here in the chemical sense of a force that causes the atoms of one element to combine with those of another, also has a positive connotation of "attraction", or common similarity. This connotation is resoundingly reversed several paragraphs later, where among the specimen's identifying features is its "attacking silicon compounds with mutual destruction as a result" [DH 59].

The nature of the meteorite is itself also described in opposing terms--it is a "messenger" [DH 81], a "message" [DH 60], and again a "messenger" [DH 81]. It is both "against Nature" [DH 75] and "beyond all Nature" [DH 81]. For one as stylistically fastidious as Lovecraft, we can be sure these variants represent auctorial intent rather than sloppy self-editing.

The second paragraph of the story hints of the effects of the colour, as it describes why foreigners shun the area: "It is not because of anything that can be seen or heard or handled" [DH 53]. It is not through the senses--sight, sound, touch--that the bizarreness of the region is perceived. Yet despite this assertion, the family most severely afflicted by the meteorite's influence--the Gardners--systematically seeks to comprehend the visitor through these sensory channels. After the advent of the meteorite to their farmstead, "the entire Gardner family developed the habit of stealthy listening, though not for any sound they could consciously name" [DH 62]. Soon after, "the Gardners took to watching at night--watching in all directions at random for something . . . they could not tell what" [DH 64]. Later, after the insanity of Mrs. Gardner and the deaths of two children, Nahum insists that something is "waiting to be seen and felt and heard" [DH 68]. The first-hand experience of the Gardners seems to contradict the initial pronouncement.

We may also note the grotesque humour in this most serious and terrifying of Lovecraft's tales. The adjective "grotesque" itself, denoting that which is "characterized by formal distortions of the natural to the point of comic absurdity [or] ridiculous ugliness",<sup>2</sup> is used twice in the story. Once it occurs in connection with the landscape, and once in regard to the tales the McGregor boys told of a woodchuck whose "face had taken on an expression which no one ever saw in a woodchuck before" [DH 61]. The use of this type of humour is not inconsistent with Lovecraft's purpose. Instead, humour is arrayed against the horror to expand upon the theme of the overthrow of the normal by the incomprehensible.

When the meteor is repeatedly struck by lightning, "digging had borne no fruit" [DH 60]. The fruit will be found soon enough, and the pun becomes apparent only two paragraphs later: "Then came the time of fruit and harvest" [DH 60]. The meteorite has infected the soil and rendered the seemingly excellent crop inedible. This ghastly metaphor is pursued to the denouement, as the narrator, musing upon the nature of the interstellar visitor, concludes that it "was no fruit of such worlds and suns as shines on the telescopes . . . of our observatories" [DH 81].

As the effects of the tainted soil and water progressively attack the Gardner family, it appears to their neighbor Ammi Pierce that "they walked half in another world between lines of nameless guards to a certain and familiar doom" [DH 66]. This serves as a terrible negation of Nahum Gardner's belief, expressed two pages later, that "he had always walked uprightly in the Lord's ways, so far as he knew" [DH 68].

Soon Nahum's son Merwin, who had shown signs of mental illness, jumps down the well where the colour lives. Nahum tells Ammi that the boy had "been going to pieces for days" [DH 68], a figurative expression that presages Nahum's own literal disintegration from the meteorite's effects soon after.

On Ammi's final visit to Nahum, the latter calls for more wood on the fire, and asks if his guest is warmer though no wood has been put on. "The stoutest cord [not literally--a cord of wood--but figuratively] had broken at last" [DH 69]. Finally, after the climactic eruption at the farmhouse, Ammi "looked back an instant at the shadowed

valley of destruction so lately sheltering his ill-starred friend". Given the source of Nahum's demise, the last adjective is grotesquely appropriate.

Of all the paradoxes of the tale, none is more central than that featured in the title itself. "It was just a colour out of space" [DH 81], the narrator concludes of the fallen meteorite. Before we proceed, let us examine the qualifying adjective "just", which is a masterful stylistic touch. Lovecraft would not have used the word in the sense of "merely", for that would seem to minimize the seriousness of the horror. It would also go against his dictum that "over and above everything else should tower the stark, outrageous monstrosity of the one chosen departure from nature" [*Marginalia* 141]. Instead, the adjective "just" in this context is rich in ambiguity, and consistent with Lovecraft's overall theme of opposition. The word can denote both "precisely" ("just right") and "possibly" ("we just might win").

But what, precisely, is a "colour out of space"? Early in the story, when the meteorite is being examined, Lovecraft first raises the issue of the "colour", as he continues his pursuit of incongruity. When professors from the local university split apart the meteor, they uncover "a large coloured globule" [DH 59]. This globule disappears when smashed with a hammer, leaving only a "hollow spherical space about three inches across"--a dimension which blatantly contradicts the earlier adjective "large".

A more challenging and important conundrum is the description of the globule itself: "The colour . . . was almost impossible to describe; and it was only by analogy that they called it colour at all". Lovecraft resorts to a literary term--analogy--to convey the verbal difficulty of describing the indescribable.

This is yet another contradiction--the colour is not actually a colour. Analogy is here not just another word for "resemblance". Instead, it conveys a *recognition of differences* between two objects, and a focus on the relations that link one object with the other.<sup>3</sup> Analogy is always translatable into the form of a proportion; that is, "a is to b, as x is to y":

$$a:b :: x:y$$

Here the analogy is as follows:

The characteristics of light described in terms of hue, luminance, and purity by which the individual visually perceives an object (a) is to a natural object (b) as [the indescribable] (x) is to the globule (y).

The reader now has some insight into the globule and its effects, but not so much that it becomes mundane. Lovecraft's brilliant gambit of analogy is successful, and he can proceed with his tale without being forced to overexplain the horror.

Also important in the title is Lovecraft's choice of the prepositional phrase "out of" (i.e. coming from beyond or outside) instead of simply using the preposition "from" (which denotes a starting point or origin). The concept of something coming "from outside space" is a paradox, since astronomical space is infinite.

It is significant that Lovecraft chose this key phrase as his story's title. It turns out that the colour is not really a colour, nor is it really out of space. Lovecraft's continual use of contradiction and opposition throughout the story--in his presentation of dwellings (eternal yet temporary), landscape (static yet restless, light yet dark), the meteorite (messenger yet message), the perception of the meteorite's effects (not sensory yet sensory), as well as his handling of tone (serious yet grotesquely humorous)--help convey the strangeness of the intrusion from outside. These skillful touches add impact to the horror borne of the negation of reason, and of the well-ordered laws of science, that is at the core of the story.

3. Stephen J. Brown, *The World of Imagery: Metaphor and Kindred Imagery* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), pp. 66ff.

## H. P. Lovecraft's Favorite Movie

By Darrell Schweitzer

H. P. Lovecraft's letters show him to be a frequent, albeit seldom enthusiastic moviegoer. There are occasional references to this or that film, often forgotten comedies, seen in the company of Frank Belknap Long and or other friends. One further recalls the two poems "To Mistress Sophia Simple, Queen of Cinema" and "To Charlie of the Comics". There are also a couple of stronger references in a letter to Farnsworth Wright dated Feb. 16, 1933--to a disgusted Lovecraft walking out of the Lugosi *Dracula* and "seeing red" out of "posthumous sympathy" for Mary Shelley upon viewing the Karloff *Frankenstein* (SL IV.154-55).

In general, Lovecraft had a low opinion of weird films and radio plays, particularly ones based on published stories (the actual subject of the letter to Wright is a polite refusal to have "The Dreams in the Witch House" adapted for radio) and recommends "as a thorough soporific . . . the average popularly 'horrible' play or cinema or radio dialogue". At the same time he concedes that weird drama can be written, "when the author starts out *from the first* to utilize the dramatic form" (SL IV.154).

Not surprisingly, Lovecraft's favorite film--certainly his favorite *fantasy* film--is an adaptation of a stage play, which would thus lose somewhat less in translation to the screen.

The 1933 time-travel film *Berkeley Square* (Twentieth Century Fox, directed by Frank Lloyd, starring Leslie Howard, Heather Angel, Alan Mowbray, and Irene Browne) gave the Old Gent "an uncanny wallop", as he describes in a letter to J. Vernon Shea dated February 4, 1934 (SL IV.364). It is an adaptation of John Balderston's stage-play of the same title, and concerns a reclusive, world-weary twentieth-century man who slips back into what he imagines to be the age of elegance and paradisiacal simplicity, Britain in the late eighteenth century.

The story managed--in the modern parlance--to push every one of Lovecraft's buttons: "It is the most weirdly perfect embodiment of my own moods and pseudo-memories that I have ever seen--for all my life I have felt as if I might wake up out of this dream of an idiotic Victorian & an insane Jazz age into the sane reality of 1760 or 1770 or 1780 . . . the age of white steeples & fanlighted doorways of the ancient hill, & of the long-s'd books of the old dark attic trunk-room at 454 Angell St. God Save the King!" (SL IV.364).

*Berkeley Square* is now, unfortunately, almost lost. I managed to see a rare showing at a Philadelphia film society, the print having been made in a laboratory by the man who showed it, a copy of a copy of what was probably the last, crumbling original in the world. It came out quite well, considering, restored to what was described as "eighty-percent" quality, with one or two jerky splices and occasional graininess. It is not commercially available in any form. No tapes or videocassettes exist, and it has apparently never been shown on television, at least not since the invention of the VCR.

The play of the same title is occasionally revived. I saw an Off-Off Broadway production about fifteen years ago, starring no less than Christopher (Superman) Reeve in the leading role as Peter Standish. The text was published as a book by Macmillan in 1929 and went through several printings.

It is clear from Lovecraft's letter to Shea that he had not seen or read the play, although Wilfred Blanch Talman and Frank Long had told him that the movie version was "slightly inferior" (SL IV.363). The play is still useful to Lovecraftians because of the extreme rarity of the film, in order to get an idea of what the story is like. The adaptation, by Balderston and one other person (whose name I could not exactly jot down as the credits flickered by),



is fairly faithful. The actual writing differences primarily consist of scenes shortened or lines of dialogue left out. I have now seen the play (fifteen years ago), read the play (recently), and seen the film (yesterday, as I write this), and can with some authority compare all three.

*Berkeley Square* is the story of Peter Standish, a scholarly young man who, were he not romantically involved with a lady, might be described as a typical Lovecraftian protagonist, socially withdrawn, bookish, and more alive in the past than in the present. He has inherited from a remote relative a fine Queen Anne-era house in Berkeley Square, London, which an ancestor of his built. Virtually nothing has changed inside the house between 1784 and 1928 save for a few minor rearrangements of furniture and the addition of electric lights. It is the world outside that has changed so much. The one other significant detail is a portrait of the ancestor (also named Peter Standish) by Joshua Reynolds, hanging in the twentieth-century "morning" room, which, in the play, serves as the scene of all the action. (The film, of course, moves around.) Surely many of us have had the feeling that in such a place the past is still alive, that at any moment people in eighteenth-century garb might come in through the doors, or that a toga-wearing figure might casually appear in some exceptionally well-preserved Roman building, or that perhaps one might slip out of the present into some past era.

Sure enough, twentieth-century Peter *does* go back, switching places with his eighteenth-century ancestor. The method is never completely explained, but apparently his researches have led him to this possibility. It is not even clear whether he switches minds, occupying the *body* of his ancestor, or whether he goes back physically, and somehow arriving in eighteenth-century garb, with his hair grown long in eighteenth-century fashion. Before leaving, he warns his associates in the twentieth century not to be too alarmed if he seems a bit odd for a few days (i.e. his twentieth-century self is being impersonated badly by eighteenth-century Peter).

He apparently materializes inside the house, back in 1784. The people there have seen eighteenth-century Peter (a rich American relative who is to marry one of the daughters of the house) alight from his carriage in the pouring rain. Someone goes to the door, but he is not there. Then twentieth-century Peter comes into the room, *in dry clothes*. (Eighteenth-century Peter presumably arrived in the twentieth century wet, in twentieth-century clothes, his hair short.) In the film this transition is finely handled, with what must have been for the time a quite sophisticated interplay of light, shadow, and background sound. Gradually twentieth-century traffic noises give way to hoofbeats on cobbles.

The dry clothes constitute the first of several "slips" Peter has to explain away as, guided by letters and a diary he found in the twentieth century, he attempts to impersonate his eighteenth-century forbear. Things do not go well, as he often refers to things which haven't happened yet (a painting Reynolds has only begun, a gift shawl one of the daughters hasn't unwrapped yet) and seems decidedly uncanny to the eighteenth-century characters. Worse yet, he follows his own emotions rather than following the "script" of his ancestor's diary and falls in love with the wrong daughter. It is an impossible, heart-wrenching situation, particularly after he takes the maiden into his confidence and gives her a vision of the terrifying twentieth-century. (This may be the weakest point in both the film and play, but I confess I can think of no more satisfactory way to do it: the girl looks into his eyes and sees twentieth-century skyscrapers, an auto race, a collage of World War I scenes--and all along everyone else has been distinctly *afraid* to look Peter straight in the eye.) Eventually he returns to 1928, only to learn from a tombstone that his beloved died three years after he knew her, in 1787, possibly pining for him. To both the eighteenth- and twentieth-century supporting cast, "their" Peter Standish has recovered from some sort of delusion or mania once the reverse-transition has taken place.

*Berkeley Square* is a fine film in its own right, certainly one of the best time-travel films ever. The performances by Leslie Howard in the lead, and by all the supporting cast, are far beyond the awkwardness of the cast of *Dracula* or the scenery-chewing melodramatics of Colin Clive and Dwight Frye in *Frankenstein*. Lovecraft saw *Berkeley Square* three times, twice on his second visit, though one suspects that he was drawn more to the supernatural/slip-into-the-past aspect than the romantic plot (though, uncharacteristically, he didn't *object* to the romantic elements). He also would have enjoyed the depiction of eighteenth-century life in the film, which constitutes one of the most convincing portrayals of a past era in any film up to that time.

*Berkeley Square* is rich in period details, which, naturally, no one other than twentieth-century Peter finds at all odd: for instance, each gentleman arriving at a party first placing a paper cone over his face, then submitting to having his wig powdered.

The movie adds a prologue-scene not in the play. Eighteenth-century Peter stops at a tavern on his way to London, where he hears news that a Frenchman has just flown across the Channel in a balloon. "It's starting," he says, "this age of speed which we will never live to see." This neatly underscores the theme of the whole film.

Some of the nastier details are left out. Twentieth-century Peter becomes disillusioned by the filth, squalor, and cruelty of the eighteenth century, finding himself "buried alive", as he puts it, in an alien era. But we encounter very little of that filth, other than an exchange with an obnoxious character over Peter's "eccentricity" of bathing, and a reference to Peter's turning his back "rudely" when a prince blows his nose with his fingers. One detail I vividly remember from the performance of fifteen years ago, which isn't in the film, is Peter's outrage when he learns that a gentleman has paid three guineas for a window seat to see a woman burned at the stake (for counterfeiting). Everyone regards him as laughably squeamish (pp. 66-67 of the published play).

There is also an amusing bit in which Peter, ever the antiquarian, is admiring the lovely Queen Anne furniture, and the lady of the house says, "The wars have impoverished so many of us here, dear cousin, alas, we cannot afford to rid ourselves of our old rubbish."

Lovecraft makes several interesting points in his letter to Shea, the most significant that when eighteenth century Peter returned to the eighteenth-century, he should have been changed by his experience. Yet he wrote his diary (which twentieth-century Peter uses as a guide) making no mention of his adventure, even though that diary clearly goes on for years beyond the period of the trans-temporal exchange. He seems to have just gone on as an ordinary eighteenth-century man.

Lovecraft wants to know what eighteenth-century Peter was doing in the twentieth century, while our attention was elsewhere. We get something of an explanation, as the housekeeper tells of drunken fits, gambling, bawdy old songs, and even an episode in which her master tried to force his way into a club claiming to be a member, only to be thrown out. Lovecraft tries to explain this as the behavior of twentieth-century Peter in a deranged state *after his return*, but I don't see anything in either the film or the play to support such a view. Eighteenth-century Peter was a bit of a rake, and *he* was the one who belonged to that club. As he is thrown out, he proclaims that the people around him won't be born for a hundred years. No, the person who so upset the housekeeper is eighteenth-century Peter. Lovecraft specifically disagrees. The reader may find the play (which is not at all scarce) and see for himself.

The significance of *Berkeley Square*, and particularly of Lovecraft's having seen it when he did, is that it must have been on his mind when he was writing "The Shadow out of Time", which, according to the now widely accepted Joshi chronology found in the new edition of *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales*, was begun in November 1934. Many of the film's elements Lovecraft discusses in his letter are present: a modern man changes places with a counterpart in the past; there is some mystery about what the person from the past has been doing in the twentieth century in the meantime; and there is even a specimen of writing discovered by the twentieth-century man which provides a crucial key. Of course the logic-lapse of the diary is precisely the point which bothered Lovecraft. He much improved on the motif, when *his* time-traveller finds writing from the remote past *in his own handwriting*. Balderston didn't think of that. Twentieth-century Peter never does find anything which he himself wrote back in the eighteenth century.

The major difference, of course, is that the protagonist of "The Shadow out of Time" changes places with a non-human creature whose body might best be described as an animate salt-shaker with tentacles. So, where Balderston is vague about whether or not Peter Standish has switched minds with his eighteenth-century counterpart, or just walked through a door into the past, Lovecraft must be explicit. And of course, too, Lovecraft's version is vastly more cosmic, complete with lost races and cities, weird alien beings and menaces, and lacking pretty girls.

*Berkeley Square* also contains uncanny parallels to *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. Twentieth-century Peter is very much like Charles. He, like Charles, discovers a portrait of an eighteenth-century ancestor which bears a striking resemblance to himself. He, like Charles, seems to have dabbled in the paranormal, leading him to an attempted recovery of the past. And, once his eighteenth-century ancestor is impersonating him in the twentieth century, everyone notices how changed he seems.

Unfortunately there is no way *Berkeley Square* could have influenced *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. According to the chronology, *Ward* was written between January and March 1927. (Even without the chronology, this is easy to establish from published Lovecraftian letters. See SL II.106.) The Balderston play bears a 1929 copyright, and in any case it is clear from Lovecraft's letter to Shea that he had not seen the stage version. Therefore he could not have been familiar with *Berkeley Square* prior to 1933. It is an amazing coincidence, but not more than that.

And it is, too, one more reason why Lovecraft found the film to be "the most weirdly perfect embodiment" of his own moods and feelings he had ever encountered. Independently, he had already written his own version.

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## A Plea for Lovecraft

By W. Paul Cook

[Reprinted from *The Ghost* No. 3 (May 1945) 55-56.--Ed.]

The best thing that can happen to the memory and the future reputation and real standing of Howard P. Lovecraft is to have his admirers, disciples, acolytes, devotees, get at least one foot on the ground. At present they are floating or suspended in some manner in the rarefied air of the empyrean with nothing substantial to get hold of, or have their noses so closely pressed to the ground in the attitude of worship that they are blinded to all real values. As one of the idolators writes me: "Lovecraft is almost a god to me."

Irreparable harm is being done to Lovecraft by indiscriminate and even unintelligent praise, by lack of unbiased and intelligent criticism, and by a warped sense of what is due him in the way of publication of his works. In fact, I am afraid that what is due him has been entirely lost sight of, and that the only thing seen is the market for everything he wrote. So wide a circulation of even his worst stuff, and his worst was pretty bad, coupled with the assurance that it is the work of a master, is certain to have a definite reaction, and a very unfavorable one, as he comes to the notice of those whose knowledge of literary values is not blinded or stultified by personal friendship and unquestioning worship.

This awakening of the world outside of Lovecraft's comparatively small circle of admirers has already begun. In a review of *Creeps by Night* in the *New York Herald Tribune*, the writer calls "The Rats in the Walls" "pure clap-trap." This is the plain truth. Of all Lovecraft's stories, that particular one is most open to the charge. Superb clap-trap, it may be, but clap-trap none the less. August Derleth, the editor of the volume, has a keen sense of literary values in classing, analyzing, and putting in their place his own writings and the work of most others, but when he comes to the work of Lovecraft he completely mislays his yardstick and is singularly obtuse, or pretends to be so. If he brought to the Lovecraft work the same critical acumen which he applies to his own work, it would be of more benefit to Lovecraft.

Arkham House can not be blamed for cashing in on the present Lovecraft furor. With great faith, courage, personal sacrifice and hard work they published the first omnibus volume, *The Outsider and Others*, and for several years held the bag before they got back their cash expenditure on it. Strange to say, it was the publication of the second omnibus (which should never have been published) that put Lovecraft over with a bang, and made the publishing of other weird books a lucrative business. This was due largely to the book being called to the attention of columnists like Vincent Starrett and others who were obliging and easy going rather than critical in giving it notices. Arkham House deserves the rewards when "The Ghosts Pay Off," as John Wilstach calls it in *Variety*. The game of course is to publish anything and everything of Lovecraft as long as Lovecraft fans are howling for more and more. So it will go on as long as there is a shred of paper remaining with a word scribbled by Lovecraft on it. This is all right for the Lovecraft fans. They should have what they want. But the fact remains that nothing worse could happen to the future standing of one of the masters in the weird field. Indeed, he may eventually come to be considered one of the supreme masters, but it will be in spite of all the present over-praise, and when his work is boiled down to one well-chosen volume of no great size.

I confess that I view with some misgivings the projected publication of a volume of Lovecraft's *Selected Letters*. It can be the very best of all his books--and should be. But it will be edited by a group who are much too "high" on the matter.

Of course there has been a conscious buildup for Lovecraft, and a build-up which has been eminently successful, in spite of the fact that it started with the distribution of the unfortunate second omnibus. The present boom in his name and works is loud enough so that he has even been heard about in Providence. Providence was the last city of any size to know about its native son, but even so, it was a triumph to make Providence hear at all.

Peculiarly typical of the Lovecraft criticism (or deliberate lack of it) is August Derleth's remarks on "The Outsider" in this issue of the *Ghost*. In his very important thesis, "The Weird Story in English Since 1890", Derleth in most of the article shows that same critical faculty which I have said he exhibits when dealing with his own work. But when he comes to deal with Lovecraft, suddenly his faculties are seemingly dormant. It may be said that since the writing of the thesis he has come to prefer "The Colour Out of Space" to "The Outsider" as one of the very greatest of the Lovecraft stories; but at that time he thought the latter topped them all. In connection with "The Outsider" he says "... the revelation, which the author conceals to the very end." I am most certainly casting no reflection on Derleth's intellectual integrity, in which I thoroughly believe, when I say that he must know better than that.

When I first saw "The Outsider" it was in the typed manuscript, and at the bottom of a page were the words: "My fingers touched the rotting outstretched paw of the monster beneath the golden arch." There was the revelation; there was the story; and I thought that was the end of the story. I was struck with admiration at the artistic restraint of the work, and started a note of praise to Lovecraft when, lifting, the sheet, I found there was more of it. Restraint disappeared and the author enjoyed himself throwing words around. All the rest was just verbiage, words, padding, anti-climax. I wrote him then that the story should have ended there. And I still think so.

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(Continued from page 25)

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### Briefly Noted

Lovecraft's "Supernatural Horror in Literature" has been receiving wide attention abroad. In 1984 it was translated in Spanish by Francisco Torres Oliver as *El horror en la literatura* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial). More recently, Malcolm Skey has translated the essay into Italian as *L'orrore soprannaturale in letteratura* (Rome: Edizioni Theoria, 1989; 8000 lire). Aside from an introduction, Skey has also included a translation of Lovecraft's "Some Notes on a Nonentity".

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## Lovecraft and Romanticism

By Donald R. Burleson, Ph.D.

Probably the most dramatic rift in the flow of the theory and practice of literature from ancient times to the present resides in the transition from the Neoclassical school of the early and middle eighteenth century to the Romantic movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a transition involving a fundamental shift in attitudes and concerns. How does H. P. Lovecraft fit into this picture? Although the question would seem to be an easy one to answer, given Lovecraft's avowed preference for the Neoclassical period over the Romantic, a quick response is apt to be somewhat facile, for the question is problematised not only by the fact that the defining boundaries of Neoclassicism and Romanticism are ultimately not so clearly drawn as one might assume, but also by the fact that in Lovecraft's own theory of literature one may discern the sorts of indeterminacies that ineluctably invade all attempts at codifying human thought into a rigid and structure-bound system.

Lovecraft's closest approach to an overt statement of assessment regarding Romanticism perhaps lies in his oft-quoted remark about the crafting of weird fiction:

Now all my tales are based on the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the vast cosmos-at-large. . . . Only the human scenes and characters must have human qualities. *These* must be handled with unsparing *realism* (not catch-penny *romanticism*) but when we cross the line to the boundless and hideous unknown—the shadow-haunted *Outside*—we must remember to leave our humanity and terrestrialism at the threshold. (SL II.150)

While admittedly Lovecraft's use of the term *romanticism* here seems to refer more to matters of stylistics and technique than to a formal school of literary theory, there is clearly a strong suggestion of a stance antithetical to some of the basic tenets of Romanticism, and particularly to the Romantic notion of elevating human feelings to a position of central importance in the scheme of things. Yet this statement is not without its implicative difficulties, in the context of differences between Romanticism and Neoclassicism; in suggesting that human laws "have no validity," Lovecraft in a certain sense sounds more like a Romantic than a Neoclassicist. In the Neoclassical world, laws and rules and underlying structures—order as understood by humans—were of primary concern and respect; while in the Romantic movement, freedom from the rigidity of mundane law was a central notion. The Neoclassical mind conformed to the propriety of law and structure as a *donnée*; the Romantic mind sought spontaneity and liberation. Lovecraft again addresses these notions when he states:

Time, space, and natural law hold for me suggestions of intolerable bondage, and I can form no picture of emotional satisfaction which does not involve their defeat. . . . (SL III.220)

Here again the suggestion is one of yearning for liberation from the constraints of law and structure, even if the implication is that in fiction one only *seems* to spy a promise of bringing about that liberation.

What are the fundamental distinguishing characteristics of Romanticism as commonly understood? Although no thoroughly satisfying definition of this protean and shifting term can be agreed upon, one may say in historicoliterary terms that, primarily, the Romantic movement marked a shift in basic literary concern, from the earlier mimetic and didactic concerns (the notion that literature should reflect that which is worthy of reflection in the world, and the notion that, in mirroring reality, literature should teach us something about how to live—notions going back to, Horace and Aristotle) to the *expressive* concern. In the Romantic milieu, the concern was not that the artist should

mimic and teach, but that the act of writing should be a cathartic activity of the writer's mind. Today, in terms of modern theories of literature (poststructuralism in particular), both the Neoclassical and the Romantic configurations of concern are problematical, in that the whole notion of *purpose* is something quite beside the point with regard to the uncontainable activities of textuality itself; texts are public documents that perpetuate and expand themselves, that continue to write themselves as it were, by being read and creatively misread. But we are interested here in periods of literary-theoretical development that nonetheless centred about concerns of purpose, however peripheral or problematised those concerns may be from the point of view of more recent thinking.

Wordsworth, in his critical preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, made what is often regarded as a key statement of the emerging spirit of Romanticism, when he wrote that a poem is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings". Enter the expressive concern. But it is not possible to regard this concern as one of cathartic expression alone, in terms of actual literary activity. Wordsworth himself did not just utter his poetry as a primal cry that had to be cried; he published his work, after all. There are relatively few documentable instances of *pure* catharsis in literary work. One thinks of stories of the Chinese T'ang Dynasty poet Li Po's sitting drunk beside a river and writing poems on slips of paper and dropping them into the water to watch them swirl away to oblivion, but one scarcely imagines Wordsworth's entertaining himself similarly in the Lake District; nor can one readily imagine Lovecraft's dropping the pencilled manuscript of "The Shadow over Innsmouth" into the Seekonk, having satisfied himself in the mere *in vacuo* catharsis of writing it. In the "expressive" concern there generally lurks also a *preservative* concern, a desire to *record* what is imagined. (Lovecraft often remarked that he didn't care whether anyone read what he wrote or not, because he wrote stories simply to please himself, but in fact he usually sought their publication, and was often extremely distressed at editorial rejections, as in the case of *At the Mountains of Madness*. And when he says, "if I could find tales or books or poems expressing everything I wish to say, I would not write at all . . ." (SL II.111), he is clearly suggesting that the act of expression alone is not all that is at stake; there is a preservative concern, a concern not only that writing take place but that reading take place.) But even with this somewhat modified view of Wordsworth's definitive statement, we may note that much of what Lovecraft says about his own philosophy of writing is markedly in consonance with the expressive concern. He writes that an author has

. . . his one legitimate goal of emotional catharsis & harmonious expression. . . . Art is not the devising of artificial things to say, but the mere saying of something already formulated inside the artist's imagination & automatically clamouring to be said. . . . The proper function of a short story is to reflect powerfully a single mood, emotion, or authentic situation in life. . . . (SL IV.263-67)

While there is a suggestion here of the old mimetic concern (in the reference to reflecting an "authentic situation in life"), and while the word "harmonious" certainly echoes Lovecraft's admiration for the proprieties of Neoclassical writing, the primary thrust of the statement is clearly one of expressive concern much in keeping with Wordsworth's "spontaneous overflow". Lovecraft says:

There can be no real authorship without a genuine and imperative urge for expression—I have not that urge except in connexion with the haunting conception of impinging cosmic mystery & the liberation implied in the suspension or circumvention of the tyranny of time, space, & natural law. . . . (SL IV.94)

And here we come back around again to the theme of liberation. With regard to the reference to the "tyranny" of law, one readily thinks how naturally those figures central to the Romantic movement of the early nineteenth century were drawn to the spirit of the French Revolution. They and the revolutionaries were kindred spirits, and Lovecraft's is, thematically, a kindred spirit as well, his Toryist objections to America's own revolutionary unsettling of established law notwithstanding.

The passage just cited also treats of Lovecraft's sense of *wonder*, a notion very much present in Romantic thought and very expressly discouraged by some of the Neoclassicists. One recalls Samuel Johnson's remarks that "wonder is a pause of reason" and that "all wonder is the effect of novelty upon ignorance". Lovecraft on this score could scarcely be farther away from Samuel Johnson when he says:

Somehow I cannot be truly interested in anything which does not suggest incredible marvels just around the corner. . . . (SL II.160)

As much as Lovecraft expressed admiration for Dr. Johnson, it is remarkable how different Johnson's attitudes were from Lovecraft's. The well-known Johnsonian dictum that "no man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money" is alone enough to drive a substantial wedge between them, given Lovecraft's attitudes about "hawking his wares", and Lovecraft is starkly at odds with Johnsonian/Neoclassical didacticism when, e.g., in *Supernatural Horror in Literature* he chafes even at what he perceives as didactic overtones in Hawthorne. Even when Lovecraft is extolling the virtues of his Neoclassicist favourites—

There has never been any prose as good as that of the early eighteenth century, and anyone who thinks he can improve upon Swift, Steele, and Addison is a blockhead (SL IV.33)

—he remarks, in the very same letter, that the "best prose is vigorous, direct, unadorn'd, and closely related (as in the best verse) to the language of actual discourse. . . ." Upon reading this, one can scarcely avoid thinking of Wordsworth's remark that a poet is a man using "language really spoken by men". In many respects, one feels that contrary to his statements about Dr. Johnson, Lovecraft might have found a readier colleague in Wordsworth than in the eminent Doctor, in that in Wordsworth's view, free and spontaneous and natural expression was paramount.

The expressive concern is evident in numerous other Lovecraftian statements about the philosophy of writing. He remarks:

What [a *really serious* weird story] sets out to be is simply *a picture of a mood*. . . . I'm simply casting about for better ways to crystallise and capture certain strong impressions. . . which persist in clamouring for expression. (SL V.198-99)

For Lovecraft, "[w]ords and images well up & demand to be set down" (SL V.136). And he says:

Emotion makes itself felt in the unconscious choice of words, management of rhythms, & disposal of stresses in the flow of narration; whilst an image or idea of natural or spontaneous occurrence is a thousandfold more vivid than any which can be arbitrarily invented. . . . (SL III.213)

Here we have direct reference to emotion and spontaneity in creative activity, conceptually echoic of Wordsworth's "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings".

But Lovecraft recognised that "schools" and facets of literary creativeness have to blend:

In my own humble and careless effusions, one sees the convergence of two separate tendencies—a liking for well-modelled expression in the traditional manner for its own sake, and a wish to get on paper some of the images and impressions constantly running through my mind. (SL II.107)

Here he has melded together the Neoclassicist concern for "well-modelled expression" with the Romantic concern for expression and preservation of mental images and feelings. And indeed, the traditional boundaries between the two periods are in some respects more of the nature of stresses which stand as spatial metaphors *for* boundaries (metaphors whose metaphoricality may be forgotten) than of the nature of boundaries that are in any more substantial way "real", permanent, or unavailable.

While any ultimately defensible definition of Romanticism remains impossible, one of the best-known characterisations of the difference between the Neoclassical and the Romantic spirit resides in the formulation given by M. H. Abrams in *The Mirror and the Lamp*, where the imagery of the title refers to the notion that in Neoclassical thought, the mind (as it enters into literary creativity) is like a mirror that faithfully reflects that which it finds, or at least reflects that which is worthy of being reflected, in the world—showing the mimetic concern—while in Romantic thought the creative mind is more like a lamp that does not merely reflect nature, but rather shines upon it, adds to it, helps create it. While it is true that Lovecraft, in this formulation, comes across decidedly pre-Romantic (in that the thematics of his fiction involve humankind's acceptance of a cosmic situation in which humans are debased, a situation which humankind is no position to modify), one may observe that there are problems with the formulation itself, in that it draws its energies from a bipolarity that, as we are coming to find common of bipolarities, cannot avoid dismantling the very spacing of the poles of which it consists.

With the Neoclassical notion of the mind as mirror as opposed to lamp (where one realises that historically a Neoclassicist would scarcely have thought of the "lamp" metaphor), we must note that the creative mind still creates;

in "mirroring" nature, it must still add something to that nature that it mirrors in the very act of expression. A purely mirroring mind would simply *contemplate* what was paraded before it, and this is not what even a Neoclassical artistic mind did—obviously, writers are writers only by virtue of writing, of making a lamp of their minds. It may be that the lamp, from the point of view of Neoclassical thought, sheds but a puny light upon the grandeur of the surrounding reality that it is supposed to reflect, but it sheds a light nevertheless; to reflect or describe is to iterate, and to iterate is to change what is iterated, to modify its texture in the very act of reflection. Conversely, a mind as conceived by the Romantics, the mind as lamp, does not manufacture its light out of nothing; it fashions what it radiates from perceptions of the world around it—in short, it radiates by reflecting. Neither pole of the bipolarity is so distinct from the other pole as it pretends to be; in each pole resides a covert kinship with the other pole. A mirror, here, is a shining mirror; and a lamp is a reflecting lamp. In fictionally portraying humankind, in story after story, as discovering its own ironically self-understood insignificance in the universe, Lovecraft in the schema of Abrams is painting mind as mirror—characterising the human condition as one of submission to the inevitabilities of the cosmos—but mirrors give back light as well as absorbing it, and there remains an interplay between humankind and the cosmos, even if, as Lovecraft once remarked, "the joke is on mankind". It is not that one cannot place Lovecraft at one pole of the binary opposition that Abrams posits; it is, rather, that the poles tend to collapse together.

Thus, despite the fact that in some respects Lovecraft's thought owes much to the Neoclassical spirit, and seems opposed to Romanticism—Lovecraft's humankind is debased, Wordsworth's and Shelley's humankind is uplifted—one finds that the categoricity of this thinking leaves something to be desired. Perhaps in a perverse kind of way Lovecraft is a sort of Romantic, though doubtless he would have cringed at the epithet. He may be viewed, paradoxically, as a Romantic in whom the Romantic quest is one led ever on by ultimate futility, led on to a dark acquisition of vision that mocks the very notion and spirit of an acquisition of vision. He would seem to be a Neoclassically bred Romantic in whom the quest of Romanticism, the quest to find expression and human meaning, leads to expressing the pointlessness of expression, and leads to a discovery of the impossibility of assigning any ultimate meaning to the quest itself. Lovecraft in practice embraces a certain kind of Romantic spirit, yet his is a Romanticism *manqué*, in which the yearning for liberation from the delimitations of law is coloured by a realisation that such liberation is ultimately not to be—but in which also the very recognition of the inevitability of cosmic law entails a basic yearning for freedom from that law, a yearning rendered all the more intense by the unreachability of liberation.

Yet in this paradox, this aporia of unresolved oscillation between the quest and the futility of the quest, there is a reinscription of that mass of complex textuality that synecdochically we call Lovecraft, a reinscription of Lovecraft on the texture of literature in terms forever resisting facile reduction to "truth". What is reducible to univocal truth amounts to textual death; what resists this reduction is textual perpetuity. The deepest and best texts are unreadable: intrinsically incapable of reduction to "settled" readings. We must continue to read what is most unreadable. A text is unreadable to the extent that it leads one ever onward into the eerie pleasures of uncertainty. In this regard, the unsettled and unsettling Lovecraftian profile has its contours pressed deeply into the fabric of textuality and language, for that profile is open and undecidable, and invites endless speculation. Lovecraft the avowed Neoclassicist may well be the ultimate Romantic, because the ultimate Romantic quest leads (with a paradoxical Lovecraftian "adventurous expectancy") into the undying ecstasies of the Abyss.



## *The Late Francis Wayland Thurston, of Boston: Lovecraft's Last Dilettante*

By Peter Cannon

S. T. Joshi has fairly called the narrator of "The Call of Cthulhu" "a colorless character".<sup>1</sup> Even with the restoration of the note supplying his name in the new corrected edition of *The Dunwich Horror*, he remains essentially anonymous, a far less vivid presence than, say, the unnamed narrator of "The Shadow over Innsmouth", about whom we learn many personal particulars. And yet this almost disembodied consciousness, this amateur detective who manages to piece together all the separated clues surrounding the Cthulhu Cult, is not without certain individual and revealing quirks.

The late Francis Wayland Thurston, like J. P. Marquand's late George Apley, comes across as a proper Bostonian: sober, decent, conservative. Although he never mentions his education, we can assume he attended the right schools. After all, his late granduncle, George Gammell Angell, was "Professor Emeritus of Semitic Languages in Brown University" (DH 126),<sup>2</sup> where his distinguished namesake, Francis Wayland, served as president. That Thurston is his granduncle's heir and executor suggests that he has no other immediate family. Evidently a bachelor, he is neither young nor old. (With a ninety-two-year-old granduncle, he could easily be middle-aged.)

Like Lovecraft, Thurston feels strongly about architecture, to judge from his dismissal of the sculptor Henry Wilcox's College Hill residence, the Fleur-de-Lys building, as "a hideous Victorian imitation of seventeenth-century Breton architecture which flaunts its stuccoed front amidst the lovely colonial houses on the ancient hill, and under the very shadow of the finest Georgian steeple in America" (DH 142). Neither does he hesitate to declare his prejudices against Wilcox's type, "at once slightly affected, slightly ill-mannered, which I could never like". After meeting the youth, however, he says, "I was willing enough now to admit both his genius and his honesty." Indeed, he is generous enough to predict that Wilcox "will, I believe, some time be heard from as one of the great decadents; for he has crystallised in clay and will one day mirror in marble those nightmares and phantasies which Arthur Machen evokes in prose, and Clark Ashton Smith makes visible in verse and in painting" (DH 143-44). For a patrician Yankee in 1926 to appreciate Arthur Machen may not be so remarkable, given the attention Machen's work had been receiving in America since the early twenties, but for one of his background to admire an artist as obscure and unconventional as Smith is, to put it mildly, highly unusual. Eccentric tastes in art and literature help to humanize our staid narrator.

In a more significant respect Thurston is a maverick for a man of his class and upbringing. Like Lovecraft, he is not a Christian. After reading about young Wilcox in the first part of Professor Angell's manuscript, he says that "only the ingrained scepticism then forming my philosophy can account for my continued distrust of the artist" (DH 130); he can "scarcely envisage the callous rationalism" with which he had set aside his granduncle's "weird bunch of cuttings" (DH 132). After his trip to New Orleans he confesses, "My attitude was still one of absolute materialism, as I wish it still were" (DH 144). His narrative chronicles his loss of faith—faith in a *materialist* view of the universe. In an ironic reversal or parallel, Thurston comes to accept the "supernatural" reality of Cthulhu, who commands a cult of worshippers like the deity of any other religion.

(Continued on page 39)

1. S. T. Joshi, *H. P. Lovecraft* (Mercer Island, WA: Starmon House, 1982), 33.

2. All citations refer to *The Dunwich Horror and Others* (rev. ed. 1984), abbreviated "DH" in the text.

## *"The Green Meadow" and "The Willows": Lovecraft, Blackwood, and a Peculiar Coincidence*

By Stefan Dziemianowicz

Though his opinion of much of Algernon Blackwood's fiction was lukewarm at best, H. P. Lovecraft was unstinting in his praise for Blackwood's story, "The Willows". "I am dogmatic enough to call 'The Willows' the finest weird story I have ever read," he wrote to Vincent Starrett in 1927 (SL II.211). Nine years later, after having read a good deal more weird fiction, Lovecraft's feelings about the story had not wavered; if anything, they had intensified: writing to Wilfred Blanch Talman, he remarked that "so far as I can see, Blackwood's 'The Willows' is the greatest weird story ever written with Machen's 'The White People' as a close second, and with things like Shiel's 'House of Sounds', Machen's 'Black Seal' and 'White Powder', Chambers' 'Yellow Sign', Poe's 'House of Usher', and James's 'Count Magnus' as good runners-up" (SL V.348). Perhaps Lovecraft's most perceptive and enduring estimation of the story can be found in his essay, *Supernatural Horror in Literature*. There, despite sharp criticism of Blackwood's "lesser work", he holds up "The Willows" as the "foremost of all" of Blackwood's stories, noting that "Here art and restraint in narrative reach their very highest development, and an impression of lasting poignancy is produced without a single strained passage or a single false note" (D 428).<sup>1</sup> This assessment appeared in the original version of *Supernatural Horror in Literature* published in the 1927 issue of W. Paul Cook's *The Recluse*, and insofar as Lovecraft saw no need to revise it in the course of amending his essay on several occasions over the next seven years, we can assume it was an opinion he held, literally, until his dying day.

Strangely enough, even though Lovecraft ranked "The Willows" higher than tales by either Poe or Machen--arguably the two greatest influences on his own horror fiction--there is little evidence in the body of his fiction to challenge Donald R. Burleson's assertion that "in general Blackwood can scarcely be said to have influenced Lovecraft significantly".<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, one sees signs of the story's impact on Lovecraft through oblique references to it in his work. The most obvious is the echo of its opening passage in the first few sentences of "The Dunwich Horror". "The Willows" begins:

After leaving Vienna, and long before you come to Buda-Pesth, the Danube enters a region of singular loneliness and desolation, where its waters spread away on all sides regardless of a main channel, and the country becomes a swamp for miles upon miles, covered by a vast sea of low willow-bushes. (AB 1)<sup>3</sup>

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1. References to Lovecraft's work appear parenthetically in the text. The corrected fifth printing of *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales* (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1986) is abbreviated as "D"; the corrected sixth printing of *The Dunwich Horror and Others* (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1984) as "DH"; the corrected third printing of *The Horror in the Museum and Other Revisions* (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1989) as "HM".

2. Donald R. Burleson, *H. P. Lovecraft: A Critical Study* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), p. 208.

3. References to Blackwood's work appear parenthetically in the text. *Best Ghost Stories of Algernon Blackwood* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971) is abbreviated as "AB".

For Blackwood's Danube and its surrounding riverbanks, Lovecraft simply substituted Aylesbury pike and the landlocked topography of his native New England:

When a traveller in north central Massachusetts takes the wrong fork at the junction of the Aylesbury pike just beyond Dean's Corners he comes upon a lonely and curious country. The grounds get higher, and the brier-bordered stone walls press closer and closer against the ruts of the dusty, curving road. The trees of the frequent forest belts seem too large, and the wild weeds, brambles, and grasses attain a luxuriance not often found in settled regions. (DH 155-56)

Thematic echoes of Blackwood's story in Lovecraft's work are less loud, but nearly as resonant. The "unseen world" of Arthur Machen's fiction is thought to have inspired Lovecraft's conceptualization of the extradimensional void that is home to Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth, and company, yet the following comment, made by a character in "The Willows", seems as expressive (if not more so) of Lovecraft's cosmic perspective as any passage from Machen's work:

"All my life," he said, "I have been strangely, vividly conscious of another region--not far removed from our own world in one sense, yet wholly different in kind--where great things go on unceasingly, where immense and terrible personalities hurry by, intent on vast purposes compared to which earthly affairs, the rise and fall of nations, the destinies of empires, the fate of armies and continents are all as dust in the balance . . ." (AB 40-41)

As for the nature of the relationship between this vast and remote "region" and the world known to mankind, one need only turn to a remark Blackwood's character utters moments earlier to encounter the same sense of cosmic indifference that informs so much of Lovecraft's horror fiction:

"There are forces here that could kill a herd of elephants in a second as easily as you or I could squash a fly. Our only chance is to keep perfectly still. Our insignificance perhaps may save us." (AB 40-41)

In trying to assess the full impact "The Willows" may have had on his writing, it is interesting to note that Lovecraft first encountered the story prior to writing "The Call of Cthulhu",<sup>4</sup> the story credited with having brought his cosmic perspective into focus. Whether or not his influence on Lovecraft's writing was significant, this places Blackwood in that same select circle that includes Poe, Dunsany, and Machen, authors whose work Lovecraft absorbed and incorporated into his evolving Mythos. In fact, Lovecraft appears to have first encountered "The Willows" only a year after discovering Machen. We have his own word, in an unpublished letter to Lillian D. Clark, that he read it in late 1924, early on in that great devouring of supernatural horror fiction that preceded his writing of *Supernatural Horror in Literature*.<sup>5</sup> In all likelihood, "The Willows" was not the first story of Blackwood's that Lovecraft read. He may very well have been encouraged to pick it up on the strength of an earlier acquaintance with Blackwood's fiction, but this is more difficult to ascertain. In a 1933 letter to James F. Morton, Lovecraft writes, "you're the guy who originally brought Algernon to my notice; a circumstance which earns you my immortal gratitude" (SL IV.147). According to L. Sprague de Camp, Lovecraft first met Morton on September 5, 1920,<sup>6</sup> so it would appear that this date is the earliest he could have read anything written by Blackwood. Indeed, on the strength of de Camp's information regarding the 1920 meeting, Blackwood biographer Michael Ashley has gone so far as to say, "it seems safe to assume [Lovecraft] knew of no Blackwood prior to that."<sup>7</sup>

Is it?

Some time prior to 1920 (presumably 1918 or 1919), Lovecraft wrote "The Green Meadow", one of the first of his so-called "revisions". His "co-author" on the story was Winifred V. Jackson, a friend from his amateur journalism circles, and the story of how their collaboration evolved has, in Lovecraft's words, a "curious history" (SL I.136). It

4. Although not, apparently, prior to the beginning of that story's six-year creative prodrome. See Steven J. Mariconda's "On the Emergence of 'Cthulhu'", *Lovecraft Studies* No. 15 (Fall 1987) 54-58.

5. S. T. Joshi, "On 'Supernatural Horror in Literature'", *Fantasy Commentator* 5, no. 3 (Fall 1985) 194, and 202n.7.

6. L. Sprague de Camp, *Lovecraft: A Biography* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), p. 152.

7. Michael Ashley, "Lovecraft and Blackwood: A Surveillance", *Crypt of Cthulhu* 7, no. 1 (Hallowmass 1987) 5.

seems that one of Lovecraft's typically vivid dreams<sup>8</sup> inspired him to write down an opening paragraph of a story--"a mere impression, or bit of colouring" as he described it. He continues that

Later, in the course of a discussion on imaginative writing, I showed it to Miss Jackson, who was amazed to find it corresponded exactly to a dream of her own--a dream which had extended much farther than mine. Upon her relating this dream, and furnishing a *map* of its supposed scene, I decided to abandon the plan for an original story and develop the Jacksonian outline . . . (SL I.136)

The extraordinary coincidences don't stop here, though, for the story that Lovecraft wound up writing<sup>9</sup> uncannily echoes Blackwood's "The Willows"--supposedly five to six years before Lovecraft is thought to have read it and at least one year before he is supposed to have read *anything* by Blackwood.

On a superficial level, the two tales appear very dissimilar. Blackwood's is the story of two travelers boating on the Danube who stumble upon a remote region inhabited by hostile elemental forces. Lovecraft's is the account of a man who, for some vague blasphemy, finds himself trapped in an otherworldly environment, possibly another planet. "The Willows" is a realistic horror story whose achievement is all the more remarkable for its refusal to confirm that the events it describes are anything more than natural phenomena misinterpreted by a narrator with an overwrought imagination. "The Green Meadow" is much more a fantasy that proceeds with dream logic and ends exactly at the moment when the narrator would be forced to reveal the cause of the unusual phenomena he witnesses. Nevertheless, in a fragment of only a few thousand words Lovecraft not only captures the eerie mood of Blackwood's novella, but reproduces some of its key imagery and comes very close to repeating passages from it verbatim.

"The Green Meadow" opens with an introduction explaining how the narrative that follows was found written in a notebook recovered from a fallen meteor.<sup>10</sup> The opening paragraph of the narrative--which, according to a letter to Reinhart Kleiner, corresponds to what Lovecraft wrote based solely on his own dream and while still ignorant of Jackson's dream (SL I.116)--echoes impressions that the landscape makes on the narrator at the opening of "The Willows". Lovecraft's narrator finds himself in what he describes as a "narrow place": "On one side, beyond a margin of vivid waving green, was the sea . . . On the other side was the forest, ancient almost as the sea itself, and stretching infinitely inland" (HM 4). Similarly, the narrator of Blackwood's story speaks of the surrounding foliage as though it were an undulating body of water. He sees "a vast sea of low willow-bushes" that "somehow give the impression that the entire plain is moving and alive. For the wind sends waves rising and falling over the whole surface, waves or leaves instead of waves of water, green swells like the sea too" (AB 1).

Both authors rely on the peculiarities of their landscapes to create a sense of foreboding. In "The Green Meadow", the narrator clearly feels a sense of claustrophobia, in spite of the openness of the setting. Shifting his attention from the green tract separating him from the ocean on one side to the forest on the other side, he sees "grotesquely huge and luxuriant, and incredibly numerous" trees, the trunks of which

were of a horrible green which blended weirdly with the narrow green tract on which I stood. At some distance away, on either side of me, the strange forest extended down to the water's edge; obliterating the shore line and completely hemming in the narrow tract. Some of the trees, I observed, stood in the water itself; as though impatient of any barrier to their progress. (HM 5)

The narrator of "The Willows" does not feel as hemmed in as Lovecraft's character, but he too notices a kind of malignant sentience in the encroaching willows. Inspecting the flow of the river from the island, he notes that

For a short mile it was visible, pouring in and out among the islands, and then disappearing with a huge sweep into the willows, which closed about it like a herd of monstrous antediluvian creatures crowding down to drink. They made me think of gigantic sponge-like growths that sucked the river up into themselves. They caused it to vanish from sight. They herded there together in such overpowering numbers. (AB 7)

8. At this point in time, Lovecraft had already dreamed the nightmares that formed the basis for "The Statement of Randolph Carter" and "Herbert West--Reanimator", not to mention the dream that would ultimately serve as the germ of "The Call of Cthulhu".

9. It is generally agreed that Lovecraft wrote most, if not all, of "The Green Meadow". For the sake of convenience, I will refer to the story throughout the text as Lovecraft's.

10. Lovecraft noted that this introductory passage was not based on any part of either his or Jackson's dreams, but supplied later, "from my own imagination" (SL I.136).

In addition to the visual peculiarities of their landscapes, the narrators of both stories are acutely aware of the sounds of their environments. Lovecraft's narrator notes a virtual absence of noise, "save of the wind-tossed wood and the sea" (HM 5). Blackwood's story is full of the sound of the wind, the water and the willows, to the exclusion of other noises, but in contrast to the quiet tone of "The Green Meadow", his is less reverential:

Contrary to our expectations, the wind did not go down with sun. It seemed to increase with the darkness, howling overhead and shaking the willows round us like straws. Curious sounds accompanied it sometimes, like the explosion of heavy guns, and it fell upon the water and the island in great flat blows of immense power. It made me think of the sounds a planet must make, could we only hear it, driving along through space. (AB 12)

Different as the aural manifestations in both stories are, they are used for essentially the same purpose. In "The Green Meadow", the sound of the wind and water gives way to the siren song of the meadow, a sound that encourages the narrator to seek its origin and flee in panic from what he sees. Likewise, in "The Willows", we find that the torrential roar of the rushing river and the wind in the willows masks the humming sound given off by the elemental forces that inhabit the island. In both stories, the sounds of nature serve as a counterpoint to the sounds of the supernatural.

Nor surprisingly, the isolated setting of both stories and its inescapable oppressiveness inspire similar moods in both narrators. What is surprising, though, is that each character expresses his mood in virtually the same language. Lovecraft's narrator is quite terse on the matter:

I saw no living thing, nor sign that any living thing save myself had ever existed. The sea and the sky and the wood encircled me and reached off into regions beyond my imagination. (HM 5)

He goes on to confess that in the midst of this setting, he feels "alone--horribly alone". The absence of other human beings and strangeness of the landscape give him a "sinister feeling of alienage".

The narrator of Blackwood's story senses that "we had trespassed here upon the borders of an alien world, a world where we were intruders, a world where we were not wanted or invited to remain". Feelings of isolation from the familiar world have an effect on his emotions not unlike the one experienced by the narrator of "The Green Meadow":

We entered the land of desolation on wings, and in less than half an hour there was neither boat nor fishing-hut nor any single sign of human habitation and civilisation within sight. The sense of remoteness from the world of human kind, the utter isolation, the fascination of this singular world of willows, winds, and waters instantly laid its spell upon us both, so that we allowed laughingly to one another that we ought by rights to have held some special kind of passport to admit us, and that we had, somewhat audaciously, come without asking leave into a separate little kingdom of wonder and magic--a kingdom that was reserved for the use of others who had a right to it, with everywhere unwritten warnings to trespassers for those who had the imagination to discover them. (AB 2-3)

For the narrators of both stories, the most oppressive sensation is not the feeling of alienation, but the sense that forces in the environment are consciously inimical to them. Referring to the surrounding forest, the narrator of "The Green Meadow" senses that, "In the voice of the swaying green branches I fancied I could detect a kind of malignant hatred and daemonic triumph" (HM 5). Not one to mince words, he admits several paragraphs later "I knew the forest hated me" (HM 6). The narrator of "The Willows" speaks throughout his account of "a singular emotion", "a curious and unwelcome suggestion", an actual "malaise" of apprehension that the willow landscape inspires in him. He struggles to articulate this feeling, balancing his overwhelming sense of alienation against his awe at the natural landscape, but finally admits that he senses a "a power . . . not altogether friendly to us" (AB 8), "a suggestion here of personal agency, of deliberate intention, of aggressive hostility" (AB 23)--or, to put it bluntly: "*The willows were against us*" (AB 15).

As can be seen, there are surface resemblances between some of the imagery in the two stories and deeper resemblances in the mood that imagery is used to create. The truly remarkable coincidence, though, is that in two

instances both authors use the same motif to intensify the apprehensions their narrators. Blackwood's narrator informs us from the beginning of "The Willows" that the river is constantly reshaping the banks and islands:

... the Danube here wanders about at will among the intricate network of channels intersecting the islands everywhere with broad avenues ... tearing at the sandy banks; carrying away masses of shore and willow-clumps; and forming new islands innumerable which shift daily in size and shape and possess at best an impermanent life, since the flood-time obliterates their very existence. (AB 1)

This image recurs throughout the story. A short while after the narrator and his companion, "the Swede", have settled on an island and are surveying it, he observes how

Everywhere the banks were crumbling as the rising flood tore at them and carried away great portions with a splash and a gurgle.

"The island's much smaller than when we landed," said the accurate Swede. "It won't last long at this rate." (AB 9)

Blackwood's purpose in describing this phenomenon is not only to impress the reader with the impermanence of boundaries (between the water and the land, between the natural and the supernatural) in this terra incognita, but subtly to manifest the hostility of the elemental forces in a seemingly natural process. Initially, his characters are mindful that their island is shrinking as a consequence of the natural ebb and flow of the river. When they find themselves stranded for longer than they had anticipated, though, they perceive their precarious situation as a consequence of forces beyond their ken working deliberately against them. In time, the erosion of the island by the river comes to symbolize the erosion of the pair's rational thinking by phenomena they do not completely understand.

Amazingly, Lovecraft seizes on virtually the same motif. The narrator of "The Green Meadow" feels the ground shake beneath his feet, and then

Beginning with a throbbing agitation which held a fiendish suggestion of conscious action, the bit of the bank on which I stood detached itself from the grassy shore and commenced to float away; borne slowly onward as if by some current of resistless force. (HM 6)

In Lovecraft's story, the eroding island is an enabling device, something to move the narrator away from the banks and into the sea where he will encounter the green meadow. Yet, like Blackwood's narrator, the narrator of "The Green Meadow" realizes what his situation portends: "Pieces of earth were constantly crumbling from the floating isle which held me, so that death could not be far distant in any event" (HM 6).

The second motif shared by both stories concerns the direct manifestation of the elemental forces. The central moment of contact between the natural and supernatural worlds in "The Willows" occurs during the travelers' first night on the island. While the Swede is asleep, the narrator finds himself suddenly awake with aggravated feelings of disquietude. He steps outside of their tent and witnesses a spectacle that renders him speechless:

It was incredible, surely, but there, opposite and slightly above me, were shapes of some indeterminate sort among the willows, and as the branches swayed in the wind they seemed to group themselves about these shapes, forming a series of monstrous outlines that shifted rapidly beneath the moon ... They first became properly visible, these huge figures, just within the tops of the bushes--immense, bronze-coloured, moving, and wholly independent of the swaying of the branches. (AB 17-18)

These towering shapes correspond perfectly to the awesome presences the narrator of "The Green Meadow" sees in the forest behind him. Lovecraft's character senses "sentient impulses of a vast vague kind" that strike him "as being in horrible colloquy with ghastly and unthinkable things which the scaly green bodies of the trees half hid; hid from sight but not from consciousness" (HM 5). As his water-borne island disengages from the shore, he has the impression that "behind me the trees and the things they may have been hiding seemed to radiate infinite menace" (HM 6). Finally, he turns around to witness "weird and terrible things" which he "shivered to behold":

For in the sky dark vaporous forms hovered fantastically, brooding over trees and seeming to answer the challenge of the waving green branches. (HM 6)

Although the two stories conclude very differently, the similarities they share up to this point stretch the bounds of simple coincidence. Yet coincidence they must be if we take several factors into consideration. In Lovecraft's published letters, there is no discussion of Blackwood or "The Willows" until his December 6, 1927 letter to Vincent Starrett (SL II.209) mentioning the appearance of *Supernatural Horror in Literature* in *The Recluse*. This doesn't mean that Lovecraft couldn't have read Blackwood long before this point in time--there is, for example, his unpublished letter to Lillian D. Clark of September 29-30, 1924, in which he mentions having just read "The Willows"--but it seems unlikely that a story Lovecraft held in such high regard would not have merited a mention prior to this time, particularly in earlier letters in which he describes his attraction to authors like Dunsany, Poe, and Machen.

Then there is the matter of "The Green Meadow" being based on one of Lovecraft's dreams. It's not as though Lovecraft never had nightmares based on his reading of horror fiction--indeed, by the time he wrote the story, he had produced other work based on dreams inspired by a reading of Ambrose Bierce (SL I.89) and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (SL I.100). But his letters show that Lovecraft was, if anything, generous to a fault in citing any literary sources for his nightmares, and it seems unlikely that he would have described the peculiar genesis of "The Green Meadow" to Reinhart Kleiner on May 21, 1920 (SL I.116) and to Frank Belknap Long on June 4 of the same year and *not* mention that a reading of Blackwood might have played a role in it.

There are other possible explanations for how the Blackwood influence might have crept into the story. The most obvious is that "The Green Meadow" was a collaboration based on the dreams of two different people: perhaps a reading of "The Willows" inspired Winifred Jackson's dream and Lovecraft, unaware of *her* source material, dutifully incorporated details from it into the story. Indeed, even though S. T. Joshi writes in his introductory "Note on the Texts" in *The Horror in the Museum and Other Revisions* that "there is little evidence to suggest that Jackson contributed any prose to either ['The Green Meadow' or 'The Crawling Chaos']" (HM vii), he has written elsewhere that "apparently the end of the story incorporates some ideas by Miss Jackson."<sup>11</sup> However, we lack the autograph manuscript for this story or any of Lovecraft's or Jackson's notes, so it is not clear which ideas (if any) of Jackson's are reflected in the final version.

A final and more remote possibility for the origin of these alleged coincidences involves the long period of time between the completion of "The Green Meadow" and its publication in the Spring 1927 issue of W. Paul Cook's *The Vagrant*. Cook was somewhat notorious for the long interval between his taking on a job and completing it, and Lovecraft was more than a little aware of this when he wrote to Frank Belknap Long in 1921: "W. P. Cook will eventually print 'The Green Meadow', but Heaven only knows when . . ." (SL I.136). In the eight or nine years after Lovecraft had submitted the story to Cook--and in particular after 1924 and his first encounter with "The Willows"--might Lovecraft have revised the as yet unpublished story, and incorporated into it details from "The Willows" that had made a strong impression on him? It's not impossible. After all, Lovecraft was constantly amending *Supernatural Horror in Literature* from the time it was in page proofs up through 1934, and even wrote wistfully to James F. Morton in April of 1927: "I have a sort of vague and nebulous idea of expanding the thing for some mythical second edition" (SL II.122). Lovecraft wasn't averse to revising work he was proud of; the question is whether he would have wasted time revising a trifle like "The Green Meadow" between the years 1924 and 1927, after he had just been published professionally.

What seems particularly strange about this whole literary puzzle is that Lovecraft himself doesn't seem to have picked up on the resemblances between his and Blackwood's stories. In none of the published letters that he wrote between his encounter with "The Willows" in 1924 and his death in 1937 does he remark upon this peculiar coincidence. This leads to some speculation regarding Lovecraft's strong feelings for Blackwood's story. While it is indisputable that "The Willows" is a masterpiece of weird fiction and that Lovecraft recognized its genius in spite of his feelings toward Blackwood's inferior work, might he have held the story in greater esteem than fiction by Poe and Machen because, at least on a subconscious level, he recognized that he himself had captured some of Blackwood's genius in his own writing without actually imitating it? It is worth noting that in his 1932 essay, "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction", Lovecraft's discussion of his personal guidelines for writing horror fiction--which are actually his general prescription for the proper writing of weird fiction--recalls his praise of Blackwood's best work five years earlier in *Supernatural Horror in Literature*. In the earlier essay, Lovecraft heralded Blackwood as "the one absolute and unquestioned master of weird atmosphere" (D 427), and extolled the stories in Blackwood's *Incredible*

11. S. T. Joshi, "Lovecraft's Revisions: How Much of Them Did He Write", in *Selected Papers on Lovecraft* (West Warwick, RI: Necronomicon Press, 1989), p. 45.

*Adventures* for their one common attribute: "Plot is everywhere negligible, and atmosphere reigns untrammelled" (D 429). It's not surprising that Lovecraft would single out this one characteristic of Blackwood's work, since his own dictum was that "Atmosphere, not action, is the great desideratum of weird fiction. Indeed, all that a wonder story can ever be is a vivid picture of a certain type of human mood."<sup>12</sup> Lovecraft went so far as to say of Blackwood that "no one has even approached the skill, seriousness, and minute fidelity with which he records the overtones of strangeness in ordinary things and experiences, or the preternatural insight with which he builds up detail by detail the complete sensations and perceptions leading from reality into supernormal life or vision" (D 427). He was to hold up these qualities of craftsmanship for emulation in his later essay, with his admonition that in a weird story "Prime emphasis should be given to *subtle suggestion*--imperceptible hints and touches of selective associative detail which express shadings of moods and build up a vague illusion of the strange reality of the unreal."<sup>13</sup> There is little doubt that what Lovecraft learned from his extensive reading of Blackwood and other authors while preparing *Supernatural Horror in Literature* helped him to formulate the aesthetic for weird fiction he articulates in "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction". But, as he writes at the end of the later of the two essays, "These are the rules or standards which I have followed--consciously or unconsciously--ever since I first attempted the serious writing of fantasy."<sup>14</sup> [Emphasis mine] No doubt, it was enough for Lovecraft to read "The Willows" five years after he had written "The Green Meadow" and recognize in Blackwood not only a kindred soul, but someone who had succeeded marvelously at writing the kind of story he himself was striving to write. Ever the gentleman, and respectful of those he deemed his superiors, Lovecraft was not likely to boast that a minor piece of his fiction had somehow "anticipated" a masterpiece like "The Willows". Thus, as with the case of Lovecraft writing his "Dunsanian" story "Polaris" a full year before he had read anything by Dunsany, we must chalk up the resemblance of "The Green Meadow" to "The Willows" as another instance of Lovecraftian literary precognition. It is a strange coincidence--but any effort to make more out of it than the current record will support might necessitate accounting for *even stranger* coincidences.

12. H. P. Lovecraft, "Notes on the Writing of Weird Fiction", in *Marginalia* (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1944), p. 139.

13. *Marginalia*, p. 139.

14. *Ibid.*

(Continued from page 32)

Before his disillusionment Thurston has his ambitions, aspiring to make a scientific name for himself. "The matter of the cult still remained to fascinate me, and at times I had visions of personal fame from researches into its origin and connexions," he states before visiting New Orleans, where what he hears so graphically at first-hand excites him afresh: "I felt sure that I was on the track of a very real, very secret, and very ancient religion whose discovery would make me an anthropologist of note" (DH 144). These yearnings, so pathetic in the light of Thurston's fate, smack of the dilettante, of the man with inherited money who, not having to work for a living, resolves to make his mark in some field. Thurston's profession, if he has any, never interferes with his pursuit of the Cthulhu Cult. With no regard to expense he roams the world, from New Orleans and Paterson, New Jersey, in America, to Auckland, New Zealand, and Sydney, Australia, in the far Pacific, and finally to Oslo, Norway. For all his traveling, however, Thurston remains a kind of armchair adventurer, more keen on summarizing the contents of the documents he uncovers than on dramatizing his own exploits. One could argue that his manuscript account reads as if he had heeded Sherlock Holmes's admonition to Dr. Watson to avoid sensationalism in writing up the detective's cases for the public.

Together with fellow Bostonian Randolph Carter and Providence aristocrat Charles Dexter Ward (one an aesthete, the other an amateur antiquarian), Thurston stands as Lovecraft's last gentleman of leisure. The protagonists of later tales, Depression-era characters like Wilmarth, Dyer, and Peaslee, will be gainfully employed scholars and professors, or else they will be penurious students like the narrator of "The Shadow over Innsmouth" or Walter Gilman in "The Dreams in the Witch House". A kindred soul like the stuffy Daniel Upton in "The Thing on the Doorstep" will be a practicing architect and family man, while Upton's friend of independent means, Edward Derby, will be weak and neurotic. Peaslee's amnesia episode will result in his estrangement from his wife and two of his three children. Even Robert Blake, the hero of Lovecraft's last story, "The Haunter of the Dark", will be a commercially successful artist and writer. (Semi-human characters like the Whateleys and the Marshes will have access to uncanny sources of gold, but aliens like the Winged Ones and the Deep Ones will act largely out of economic motives.) This shift surely reflects Lovecraft's increased social consciousness, though one cannot say that "The Call of Cthulhu" would have been a better story had Thurston been, for example, one of New England's traditional "salt of the earth", to use his phrase (DH 131). Probably only an educated and cultured person, possessed of unlimited wealth and time, and free of emotional encumbrances, could have cracked the global Cthulhu conspiracy.



## Who Was the Real Charles Dexter Ward?

By M. Eileen McNamara and S. T. Joshi

No one can deny that *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (1927) is a heavily autobiographical novel. In its paeon to the glories of Providence and New England it mirrors *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (1926-27); and it is significant that both these novels were written directly after Lovecraft's return to Providence after two miserable years in New York. More specifically, such a thing as Charles Dexter Ward's ecstatic return to Providence after years in strange foreign lands is a faithful echo of Lovecraft's own return to his homeland after his "New York Exile". Accordingly, we can say that Ward is Lovecraft; but the moment we make this identification, odd details begin to trouble us. It is, for example, Marinus Bicknell Willett, not Ward, who is said to live at Lovecraft's own residence at 10 Barnes Street, while Ward and his family live around the corner at the Halsey mansion at 140 Prospect Street (given in the novel, for no apparent reason, as 100 Prospect Street). Very recently, new evidence has surfaced that allows us to be still more precise on where and how Charles Dexter Ward's personal characteristics really originated.

As stated, Lovecraft in 1927 was living nearly across the street from the Halsey mansion when he wrote *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*--he claimed he could see the home from his back window. But there is now reason to believe that the young man who actually lived in that mansion was in large part the model for Charles Dexter Ward.

The Halsey mansion had stood vacant for several years before it was purchased in 1908 by William Lippitt Mauran and his wife Mary Louise Lewis Mauran. It was William Mauran who, with George Eastman of Eastman Kodak, patented the photostat process; and here we have the first--albeit dim and perhaps accidental--connexion with *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, since in the novel there is repeated mention of "the photostatic copy of the Hutchinson cipher".<sup>1</sup>

In 1910 a son was born to William and Mary Mauran, also named William Lippitt Mauran. Bill, as he was called, was a sickly child--as Lovecraft had been--and spent the first fourteen years of his life as an invalid, being wheeled through the streets in a carriage by a nurse. Compare a passage early in the novel:

Here he was born, and from the lovely classic porch of the double-bayed brick facade his nurse had first wheeled him in his carriage. . . .

He had been wheeled, too, along sleepy Congdon Street, one tier lower down on the steep hill, and with all its eastern homes on high terraces. The small wooden houses averaged a greater age here, for it was up this hill that the growing town had climbed; and in these rides he had imbibed something of the colour of a quaint colonial village. The nurse used to stop and sit on the benches of Prospect Terrace to chat with policemen; and one of the child's first memories was of the great westward sea of hazy roofs and domes and steeples and far hills which he saw one winter afternoon from that great railed embankment, all violet and mystic against a fevered, apocalyptic sunset of reds and golds and purples and curious greens. (113)

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1. *At the Mountains of Madness and Other Novels*, ed. August Derleth, rev. S. T. Joshi (Snuk City, WI: Arkham House, 1985), p. 157. Subsequent references to the novel are derived from this edition, and will occur parenthetically in the text.

This appears to be a fascinating mixture of autobiography and Lovecraft's observations of Bill Mauran. In the first place, was Lovecraft ever wheeled in a carriage by a nurse? There is no evidence for it--we know only that his mother occasionally accompanied him on such outings as a child. Secondly, even if he had been so wheeled, he would not have been taken so far from his birthplace (454 Angell Street) as "sleepy Congdon Street". This detail must reflect Lovecraft's sightings of the actual resident of the Halsey mansion, Bill Mauran. Thirdly, while it is true that Lovecraft had an apocalyptic vision of a sunset as described in the passage just quoted, this event did not take place in Providence but in Auburndale, Massachusetts, where Lovecraft's family lived briefly when he was very young. Compare this passage in a letter of 1930:

What has haunted my dreams for nearly forty years is a *strange sense of adventurous expectancy connected with landscape and architecture and sky-effects*. I can see myself as a child of 2½ on the railway bridge at Auburndale, Mass., looking across and downward at the business part of the town, and feeling the imminence of some wonder which I could neither describe nor fully conceive--and there has never been a subsequent hour of my life when kindred sensations have been absent. (SL III.100)

Other details fit in with the notion that Bill Mauran was the partial model for Charles Dexter Ward. Ward is described as "tall, slim, and blond" (112); Mauran was slim and blond, but not tall, whereas Lovecraft was tall and slim but truly blond only as a child. Because of his forced reclusiveness, Mauran was the subject of many rumours (as was Lovecraft as a child), and--as Lovecraft knew--the Halsey mansion was regarded by the Irish maids to be haunted. Furthermore, after Mauran was cured of his disease, he went frequently to Butler Hospital for counselling. Recall that Joseph Curwen, passing himself off as Ward, is confined to Butler Hospital at the end of the novel. Of course, this is logical, since Butler is the only psychiatric hospital in the area--both of Lovecraft's parents died there.

Mauran's closest friend in his teen years was a Tillinghast. Can this have had anything to do with Lovecraft's creation of Joseph Curwen's wife Eliza Tillinghast, daughter of Capt. Dutec Tillinghast? Alert readers of Lovecraft will point out that the character Crawford Tillinghast appears in the early story "From Beyond" (1920); but what is not commonly known is that in the original manuscript of that story the character is named "Henry Annesley", and Lovecraft altered the name only when preparing the story for publication in *The Fantasy Fan* for June 1934, years after writing *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. The Tillinghasts in the novel, accordingly, are the first use of that name in Lovecraft.

Bill Mauran was seventeen when Lovecraft wrote his novel. Mauran's family feels that it is unlikely that Mauran and Lovecraft actually met--Mauran was a shy youth, and would talk to no one on his solitary jaunts about town--but the family also believes that Mauran could not have escaped Lovecraft's notice. Mauran's story came to a happier conclusion than did Charles Dexter Ward's, however: he overcame his infirmities and became a successful physician.

Perhaps the most telling parallel--one that perhaps conclusively proves that Lovecraft knew of Mauran and had him partly in mind when writing his novel--is the Pawtuxet farmhouse, used by Joseph Curwen and then by Charles Dexter Ward, that figures so prominently in the story. Let us consider the first mention of it:

On the Pawtuxet Road he had a farm, at which he generally lived during the summer, and to which he would frequently be seen riding at various odd times of the day or night. (118-19)

There is no such thing as the Pawtuxet Road--not today, at any rate. More important, the question arises as to why Lovecraft would choose this particular area as the locale for this ominous dwelling. Certainly he wished a remote and little-frequented region, but why Pawtuxet? The fact is that the Maurans owned just such a farmhouse there. The Lippitt farmhouse was built in colonial times, and towered over the Pawtuxet River. Mauran's aunt, Julia Lippitt, was a prominent social leader and frequently invited the women of the area to the farm. It may be that Lovecraft learned of it through his aunts, Lillian D. Clark and Annie E. Phillips Gamwell. The Phillips and Mauran families had been associated since colonial times when they lived in Warren, R. I. An early Mauran married a Bicknell--this may well be the source of the name Marinus Bicknell Willett, especially since the two other names are pretty clearly derived from an individual who donated some material to the Rhode Island Historical Society in 1917, as Lovecraft learned in 1925: "Presented by his Daughter, Mrs. Marinus Willett Gardner."<sup>2</sup>

(Continued on page 48)

## Biographical Writing on Lovecraft: A Review of the Literature

By Kenneth W. Faig, Jr.

[Originally written in 1985 for the German magazine *Quarber Merkur*]

Biographical notice of H. P. Lovecraft dates as early as 1915, when Andrew Francis Lockhart's biographical sketch of Lovecraft appeared in the series "Little Journeys to the Homes of Prominent Amateurs" in *The United Amateur*, accompanied by a photograph of Lovecraft on the cover. Lovecraft was recruited for amateur journalism out of the letter columns of *Argosy/All Story* by Edward F. Daas in 1914 and was serving as Vice President of the United Amateur Press Association when Lockhart's article appeared in 1915. Most of the biographical notices of Lovecraft which appeared prior to 1943 may be found in amateur press association publications, including, notably, Lovecraft's own "Brief Autobiography of an Inconsequential Scribbler" (*The Silver Clarion*, 1919; rpt. *The Lovecraft Collector's Library*, 1953; rpt. Necronomicon Press, 1977); the fine Lovecraft memorial issue of Hyman Bradofsky's *The Californian* (Summer 1937), including Reinhart Kleiner's notable selection from his letters from Lovecraft under the title "By Post from Providence" (the first significant published collection of Lovecraft letters); Edward H. Cole's Lovecraft memorial issue of *The Olympian* (1940); and culminating in W. Paul Cook's still unequalled portrait *In Memoriam Howard Phillips Lovecraft: Recollections, Appreciations, Estimates*, first published by the author (Driftwind Press, North Montpelier, Vermont) in an edition of ninety-four copies in 1941 and subsequently reprinted by Arkham House (*Beyond the Wall of Sleep*, 1943), Mirage Press (as *H. P. Lovecraft: A Portrait*, 1968), and Necronomicon Press (1977). Cook's extended essay, a loving if opinionated portrait of the author by one of his closest friends, marks the highwater point of amateur evaluation of Lovecraft and may still be read with great profit. An alternative autobiographical essay by Lovecraft, dating to 1933, titled "Autobiography: Some Notes on a Nonentity", was apparently first published in *Beyond the Wall of Sleep* in 1943. This essay was reprinted by Arkham House as a separate brochure in 1963, with annotations by August Derleth, and has since appeared in *Mirage on Lovecraft* (ed. Jack L. Chalker, 1965) and in German translation in *Insel Almanach auf das Jahr 1972* (ed. Franz Rottensteiner, 1971). Other biographical material of lesser importance has appeared in amateur press association publications over the years; Truman J. Spencer's notable *History of Amateur Journalism* (The Fossils, 1957) makes frequent reference to Lovecraft's involvement in amateur affairs. Today the vein of biographical writing on Lovecraft in amateur journals survives largely in the Lovecraft- and fantasy-oriented amateur press associations (notably the Esoteric Order of Dagon, the Necronomicon Amateur Press Association, and, to a lesser extent, the Fantasy Amateur Press Association) and in science fiction/fantasy fandom at large. F. Lee Baldwin's brief "H. P. Lovecraft: A Biographical Sketch" from *Fantasy Magazine* (April 1935) might be considered the beginning of this particular line of development, which was deeply enriched by contributions to the Fantasy Amateur Press Association during the Lovecraft "boom" of the 1940s, Francis T. Laney's notable fanzine *The Acolyte* (1942-46), and the research of George T. Wetzel culminating in the publication of *The Lovecraft Collector's Library* in 1952-55. (The sixth volume of *The Lovecraft Collector's Library*, entitled *Commentaries*, contains brief biographical memoirs by Lovecraft's amateur associates Ernest A. Edkins, James F. Morton, Jr., and Edward H. Cole.) Today good if sometimes unpolished biographical contributions on Lovecraft

continue to appear in amateur sources from time to time. As one of the most prominent amateur journalists of his day, Lovecraft would undoubtedly have been pleased with this tradition.

Notice of Lovecraft outside of amateur journalism was sparse during the author's lifetime, although *The Best Short Stories of 1928* as edited by Edward J. O'Brien (Dodd, Mead, 1929) contains an excellent thumbnail sketch of Lovecraft, probably based largely on material contributed by Lovecraft himself. While no substantial biographical essay on Lovecraft appeared in *Weird Tales*, the principal market for his fiction from 1923 until his death, editor Farnsworth Wright did reveal bits and pieces about one of the favorites from his "stable" of writers and there was an outpouring of tributes in "The Eyrie" letter column following Lovecraft's death in 1937. (For an extensive reprinting of this material, see S. T. Joshi and Marc A. Michaud, eds., *H. P. Lovecraft in "The Eyrie"*, Necronomicon Press, 1979.) A groundbreaking biographical appraisal of Lovecraft by Winfield Townley Scott (1910-1968), then literary editor of *The Providence Journal*, appeared in that newspaper in the issue of December 26, 1943, and was much expanded into a lengthy essay "His Own Most Fantastic Creation" for the Arkham House collection *Marginalia* in 1944. Scott had an intense sympathy for and understanding of Lovecraft's New England regionalism, which is the point of departure for some of his most effective horror stories; in addition, he had access to many residents of Providence who had known Lovecraft well, including neighbor Addison P. Munroe and the Lovecraft family lawyer Albert A. Baker (1862-1959), who served not only as Lovecraft's guardian during his minority but also as the executor of his estate in 1937 and died as the oldest practicing attorney in Rhode Island. Scott's *Marginalia* essay, reprinted in his Doubleday collection *Exiles and Fabrications* (1961), is still a basic biographical reference which needs to be consulted by any student of Lovecraft's life. It is to be much regretted that Scott did not undertake a full biography of Lovecraft before his removal from Providence to the Southwest in 1951. He might have developed much material which is simply unobtainable at this remove in time.

From 1939 to his death in 1971 August Derleth of Arkham House undoubtedly published the greatest volume of biographical material relating to Lovecraft. This must necessarily stand as a secondary achievement when compared with his publication of Lovecraft's literary work in the pioneering collection *The Outsider and Others* (1939) and subsequent volumes, but it stands as a significant contribution to our understanding of Lovecraft nevertheless. Derleth's most notable biographical contribution was undoubtedly the *Selected Letters* project, which had been announced as "Forthcoming" from Arkham House early in the 1940s and which finally commenced publication in 1965, buoyed by the renewed success of the Lovecraft fiction in its 1963-65 Arkham House reprinting and the initial Lancer Books paperback collections. Over the years, Derleth and Donald Wandrei had shared the editorial duties for this project, which gradually increased in scope as more and more source material came to light. The first three volumes, which appeared in 1965-71, are credited to Derleth and Wandrei; the final two volumes, which appeared in 1975 and 1976, following Derleth's death and Wandrei's severance of his relationship with Arkham House, are credited to Derleth and Arkham House editor James Turner. While the *Selected Letters* are oriented toward Lovecraft's literary, political, and philosophical views, they also constitute an unrivalled biographical resource. It is only to be hoped that the full transcriptions of the letters, prepared by Derleth's secretary in connection with the project, will eventually reach Brown University's Lovecraft Collection, as Derleth promised in print during his lifetime.

Perhaps Derleth felt too close to his subject to undertake a biography of Lovecraft of his own. In addition, he was fearfully busy with his own writing and publishing projects. The closest he came to a full biography was his book *H. P. L.: A Memoir* (Ben Abramson, 1945), which, while primarily interpretative, does contain a wealth of interesting biographical material available nowhere else. He contributed several essays to the secondary Lovecraft collections from Arkham House and followed up in 1959 with a chapbook, *Some Notes on H. P. Lovecraft*. Toward the end of his life he announced a further collection of biographical notes on Lovecraft as forthcoming from his pen, but this work has never appeared. Whether any portion was left complete in manuscript at his death is unknown to the present writer. If Derleth's own biographical work on Lovecraft was modest, considering his unique involvement in the publication of Lovecraft's literary work and the growth of his literary reputation, the wealth of biographical material from other hands which he published was very great indeed. While the primary Arkham House collections of Lovecraft's fiction, as reprinted in 1963-65, contain only brief introductions by Derleth (the 1984 reprinting of *The Dunwich Horror and Others*, with newly established texts by S. T. Joshi, contains a new introduction by Robert Bloch), the secondary collections published in the wake of the success of *The Outsider and Others* (1939) and *Beyond the Wall of Sleep* (1943)—namely, *Marginalia* (1944), *Something about Cats* (1949), *The Shattered Room* (1959), and *The Dark Brotherhood* (1966)—all contain notable biographical memoirs, either commissioned or accepted by Derleth, from the likes of Robert Bloch, Donald Wandrei, E. Hoffmann Price, Rheinart Kleiner, Samuel Loveman, Sonia G. Lovecraft Davis, Robert H. Barlow, Alfred Galpin, Fritz Leiber,

William L. Crawford, Frank B. Long, Clifford M. Eddy, and others. Outside of the Lovecraft omnibuses, Zealia Bishop provides a notable portrait of Lovecraft from the perspective of a revision client in *The Curse of Yig* (Arkham House, 1953). It may truly be said that Derleth almost single-handedly made possible the literary recognition of Lovecraft. As part of doing so, he published the greatest amount of biographical writing on Lovecraft which has emerged to date from any publisher. The biographical memoirs of Lovecraft published by Arkham House over the years could usefully be gathered in a single volume for easy reference.

In a sense, the Arkham House biographical vein on Lovecraft may be said to have culminated in Frank Belknap Long's *Howard Phillips Lovecraft: Dreamer on the Nightside* (1975), which, with W. Paul Cook's "In Memoriam" essay in *Beyond the Wall of Sleep* (1943), frames the Arkham House contribution to Lovecraft's biography with book-length memoirs by two of his closest friends. The biographical notes in Long's collection *The Early Long* (Doubleday, 1975) are also a valuable reference for Long's literary association with Lovecraft. The Long books tend to be obscured somewhat by de Camp's biography of the same year; one must remember that Long writes with the discretion of a personal friend and a concentration upon the intellectual aspects of his association with Lovecraft whose seed was undoubtedly sown by Grandpa Theobald himself.

Amidst the wealth of Arkham House material, one misses most memoirs by Clark Ashton Smith, J. Vernon Shea, and Wilfred B. Talman. Shea finally published his own treatment of Lovecraft, "H. P. Lovecraft: The House and the Shadows", in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* in 1966 (reprinted, as a separate brochure, by Necronomicon Press, 1982), and Talman published a memoir of Lovecraft entitled *The Normal Lovecraft* as a chapbook with Gerry de la Ree in 1973. To the knowledge of the present writer, no extensive treatment of Lovecraft by Clark Ashton Smith exists, although Smith did provide moving tributes in published letters and verse.

If Arkham House neglected any biographical area in relationship to Lovecraft, it was probably the opportunity for more memoirs by Lovecraft's longstanding friends in amateur journalism, of whom only Cook, Kleiner, and Loveman contributed substantial Arkham House memoirs. It is a pity indeed that we have no extensive memoirs of Lovecraft by Maurice W. Moe and James F. Morton, Jr., two of Lovecraft's oldest amateur friends; regrettably, both died only a few years after Lovecraft's own death, Moe in 1940 and Morton in 1941. Derleth, however, never pursued Lovecraft's amateur associations with the same energy as he pursued those of the fantasy circle who had corresponded with HPL. A few, generally short memoirs of HPL by amateur journalism friends have appeared in amateur journals. The notable highpoints are described above. Among present-day amateur journalists, Helen and Sheldon Wesson have done much to keep the flame of interest in Lovecraft alive. Recently Lovecraftians have begun to use Lovecraft as a character in fictional endeavors of their own; notably in Peter Cannon's *Pulptime* (Weirdbook Press, 1984), in which HPL, Frank Belknap Long, and Houdini collaborate with Sherlock Holmes, and Richard A. Lupoff's *Lovecraft's Book* (Arkham House, 1985), in which Lovecraft, his wife Sonia, and Houdini's brother and fellow magician Hardeen the Magnificent are caught in a tangled web of international intrigue woven by Nazi sympathizer George Sylvester Viereck.

During the first twenty-five years of activity by Arkham House in publishing the work of Lovecraft (1939-64), academic endeavor produced two notable biographically oriented treatments of Lovecraft. James Warren Thomas' 1950 Brown University M. A. thesis, which relied heavily on Lovecraft's letters to his aunts Lillian Clark and Annie Gamwell as preserved in the Lovecraft Collection at Brown University, was eventually serialized in edited form in the University of Detroit literary magazine *Fresco* in 1958-59. In 1962 Arthur S. Koki completed a Columbia University M. A. thesis entitled "H. P. Lovecraft: An Introduction to His Life and Writings", based upon primary research in Providence, New York, and elsewhere, which remained the fullest biographical treatment of Lovecraft available until the de Camp biography appeared in 1975. Concentrating on the strength of the Brown University resources, Koki produced a particularly notable treatment of Lovecraft's early years; to the knowledge of this writer, he was the first researcher to consult many primary sources, such as wills and vital records, and was the first researcher to locate and interview Lovecraft's surviving relatives in Rhode Island, descendants of his grandfather Whipple V. Phillips' brother James W. Phillips. Subsequent academic research on Lovecraft has concentrated upon the critical evaluation of his work, rather than upon the man. Of the important biographical contributions by academic writers, however, it would be remiss not to mention Barton L. St. Armand's "Facts in the Case of H. P. Lovecraft" (*Rhode Island History*, 1972), which continues and enriches the tradition established by Winfield Townley Scott of interpreting Lovecraft in the framework of his native place, and Henry L. P. Beckwith, Jr.'s *Lovecraft's Providence* (Donald M. Grant, 1979; rev. 1986), which paints an anecdotal portrait of many of the Providence locales which were closest to Lovecraft's heart.

The richness of the critical work on Lovecraft in the past decade, spearheaded by St. Armand, Mosig, Joshi, and Burleson, to name only a few of the most prominent contributors, has been little less than astonishing when

compared with the neglect of previous decades. While at the same time contributing notable critical studies, S. T. Joshi has become the pre-eminent Lovecraft scholar of the 1970s and the 1980s through his bibliographical work, culminating in the definitive *H. P. Lovecraft: An Annotated Bibliography* (Kent State University Press, 1981), and his textual work, culminating in the revised texts of Lovecraft's fiction which began to appear from Arkham House in 1984. However, his *H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism* (Ohio University Press, 1980) contains a biographical interpretation on which he collaborated with the present writer; and his *H. P. Lovecraft* (Starmont House, 1982) contains a biographical treatment of unparalleled conciseness and acuity, skillfully integrated with the major critical theses of the book, which is in the Starmont Reader's Guide series. Donald R. Burleson's *H. P. Lovecraft: A Critical Study* (Greenwood Press, 1983) also has a sound biographical footing for its criticism. St. Armand's "H. P. Lovecraft: New England Decadent" (*Caliban*, 1975; reprinted separately by Silver Scarab Press, 1979) and *The Roots of Horror in the Fiction of H. P. Lovecraft* (Dragon Press, 1977) expand the premise of traditional New England influences in Lovecraft's work in fascinating and variegated ways. Of modern Lovecraft scholars, perhaps Barton St. Armand, Donald R. Burleson, and Peter Cannon have the deepest grasp of Lovecraft's essential New England roots.

A full-length biography of Lovecraft appeared at last from Doubleday in 1975, written by the prominent science fiction writer and essayist L. Sprague de Camp (b. 1907). De Camp had deferred to Derleth's interest in Lovecraft during the lifetime of the Arkham House proprietor; but when Derleth failed to leave a Lovecraft biography, he decided to undertake the project on his own. The de Camp biography, meticulously researched in the usual manner of its author, contains a minimum of factual error and provides the first reliable, full-length portrayal of Lovecraft's career. Its value judgments and criticisms, however, have been the subject of attack by many students of Lovecraft and his work. Suffice it to say that de Camp prefers the fantasy element to the horror element in Lovecraft's fiction, in opposition to the judgment of the majority of admirers and critics, and has no regard whatever for Lovecraft's pedestrian management of his career as a writer. Whether the busy career as an editor or technical writer which de Camp envisions as ideal for Lovecraft would have left time for the creation of the wonderful Gothic fictions for which Lovecraft has become world-famous is of course a matter to be resolved only in an alternative universe; however, the present writer does feel that some of de Camp's harshest critics have missed his very real sympathy with Lovecraft's pinched economic circumstances and his identification with Lovecraft's intellectualism. While de Camp went on to write a full-length biography of Robert E. Howard, *Dark Valley Destiny* (Bluejay, 1983), one feels that his identification with his earlier subject, Lovecraft, was much stronger. Derleth had prohibited James Warren Thomas from publishing Lovecraft's most rabid statements on racial matters, which for the most part occur in his juvenile writings and in his letters to his aunt Lillian D. Clark written during the period of his New York "exile" (1924-26); de Camp, for the first time, published these in full, fortunately not out of context, and opened up a scholarly debate as to the source and nature of Lovecraft's views which is still continuing worldwide. For all its flaws of critical judgment and excessive "preaching", and a system of references which is very difficult to use, the de Camp biography still stands as our only full-length biography to date and a valuable book which will spark discussion and debate for decades to come. Perhaps the controversy which it has stirred in the decade since its original publication is indicative of its importance.

A virtual renaissance of writing about Lovecraft and his work followed in the wake of the de Camp biography. Uniquely important for the understanding of Lovecraft's final mature years in Providence and his contribution to the world of the young science fiction and fantasy fan editors of the 1930s is Willis Conover, Jr.'s lavish *Lovecraft at Last* (Carrollton-Clark, 1975), a magnificently produced and illustrated volume which imparts a "feel" of the man and his letters that can be equalled only by consulting some of the original letter files at Brown University and elsewhere. More than any other biographical work on Lovecraft, *Lovecraft at Last* is essentially an "experience". This is a book which the present writer fears many library collections of Lovecraft's work will miss, to their detriment. In the opinion of the present writer, Willis Conover, Jr. stands second only to August Derleth and Donald Wandrei among the ranks of Lovecraft's friends and correspondents who have invested their own resources in the publication and preservation of HPL's work. And this opinion is not meant to demean in any way the many acts of generosity to researchers and libraries by many of Lovecraft's friends and correspondents.

Any discussion of recent biographical work undertaken on Lovecraft would fall far short of completeness if it failed to mention the notable research of R. Alain Everts, who from 1968 onward visited virtually all of Lovecraft's surviving friends and correspondents and where possible recorded their reminiscences. Everts has published a tantalizing sample of his massive research in such articles as "Howard Phillips Lovecraft and Sex" (*Nyctalops*, 1974), "The Lovecraft Family in America" (*Xenophile*, 1975), "The Death of a Gentleman" (*Nyctalops*, 1973; expanded in 1988 as a booklet from The Strange Co.), "Ira A. Cole and Howard Phillips Lovecraft" (*HPL*, 1972; rpt. 1975) (Cole

was the "fourth" of the famous "Kleicomolo"), and "Winifred Virginia Jackson—Lovecraft's Lost Romance" (with George T. Wetzel, Esoteric Order of Dagon, 1976). Of all the researchers of Lovecraft's life, Everts, in the opinion of the present writer, stands best-equipped to write a definitive, multi-volume biography of Lovecraft. Whether circumstances will permit the undertaking of such a work by Everts or not, it is certainly to be hoped that he will continue to contribute to Lovecraft studies in the future. As of the present writing, he is the managing editor of the Necronomicon Amateur Press Association, which is largely devoted to Lovecraft. He has also established a small press, The Strange Company, which publishes fiction and poetry in the Lovecraftian vein and in addition two journals, *Etchings and Odysseys* and *The Arkham Collector* (New Series), with many notable contributions to Lovecraftian research.

No treatment of the biographical resources available for the study of H. P. Lovecraft could fairly conclude without mention of the notable contributions of Marc A. Michaud's Necronomicon Press of West Warwick, Rhode Island, over the past decade. In spite of a period of military service, Michaud, with the assistance of his parents, has continued to offer students of Lovecraft invaluable reprints of Lovecraftian source material and original works of research since the foundation of Necronomicon Press in 1976. Beginning with rather crude offset reproductions of ordinary typescripts, the productions of the press have evolved to handsomely executed chapbooks, generally reproduced from IBM Selectric text, although some few reprint items have been done in facsimile. The unique and talented work of Lovecraftian artist Jason Eckhardt has graced many of the press's publications. While a number of items have lapsed from print, many of these are still generally available from specialist dealers at modest prices. In essence, the Necronomicon Press publications have never been intended as collector's items, but as reasonably priced vehicles for the publication of specialist research and reprints. The reprint items include such highlights as collections of Lovecraft's contributions to *The Pawtuxet Valley Gleaner* (which was the first publication of the press; reissued 1986), *The United Amateur*, and *The Californian*; the complete run of Lovecraft's amateur journal *The Conservative* (regrettably not entirely in facsimile); three series to date of *Uncollected Prose and Poetry*; and notable reprints of individual items such as the two issues of *The Providence Amateur* (1915-16), Sonia Greene's *The Rainbow*, and Lovecraft's extended essay on amateur journalism, *Looking Backward*. The fruits of original research are represented by such items as Joshi's and Michaud's *H. P. Lovecraft in "The Eyrie"* (1979), already mentioned in connection with *Weird Tales*; S. T. Joshi's *An Index to the Selected Letters of H. P. Lovecraft* (1980), which vastly enhances the usefulness of the five Arkham House volumes for readers and students; S. T. Joshi's and Marc A. Michaud's *Lovecraft's Library: A Catalogue* (1980; rev. ed. forthcoming), an annotated edition of the listing of the contents of Lovecraft's personal library made after his death by Miss Mary Spink, which has great potential for the study of Lovecraft's literary sources; and the present writer's *H. P. Lovecraft: His Life, His Work* (1979), a thumbnail sketch and chronology of Lovecraft's life which is greatly enriched by S. T. Joshi's appended chronology of Lovecraft's literary work. Most recently, in 1985, Necronomicon Press has published for the first time the complete text of Sonia G. Lovecraft Davis' revealing memoir of her husband, as *The Private Life of H. P. Lovecraft*. Until this publication, this essay had appeared only in a severely edited and abridged version in *Something about Cats* (1949). In addition, since 1979, Necronomicon Press has been the publisher of the twice-yearly *Lovecraft Studies*, under the able editorial direction of S. T. Joshi. In its tenth issue, dated Spring 1985, S. T. Joshi takes an extended look at contributions to biographical scholarship on Lovecraft during the period 1971-82, as part of his three-part overview of all kinds of scholarly work on Lovecraft undertaken during this period. Together with Robert M. Price's *Crypt of Cthulhu* and R. Alain Everts' *Etchings and Odysseys*, *Lovecraft Studies* forms a triad of active, useful Lovecraftian periodicals being published at the time of this writing.

Whither biographical work on H. P. Lovecraft? The high-points of the accomplishments so far are surely W. Paul Cook's *In Memoriam Howard Phillips Lovecraft* (1941), Winfield T. Scott's "His Own Most Fantastic Creation" (1944), Long's *Dreamer on the Nightside* (1975), Conover's *Lovecraft at Last* (1975), and de Camp's *Lovecraft* (1975). (What a year for Lovecraft biography, 1975!) Historically, our greatest loss has undoubtedly been the failure of Winfield T. Scott to undertake a full biography in the wake of his initial research in the early 1940s, although one may also shed a tear that August Derleth did not pen a more extended biographical treatment using the accumulated resources of the Arkham House archives and that R. Alain Everts has found so many frustrations in publishing the results of his research. We may be thankful, however, that so many have done so much. While the friends and contemporaries of HPL have by no means completely passed from among us at the time of this writing, those who were truly his contemporaries and peers, like Frank Belknap Long and Helen V. Sully, are now octogenarians and have probably recorded for posterity just about everything about HPL they choose to record. (Amazingly enough, Long, who celebrates his eighty-third birthday in 1985, is still busy with his own, active literary

career. After the loss of so many Lovecraft associates over the past decades, we may firmly hope that this stalwart will be very much with us for the Lovecraft centennial in 1990. After all, he will only be eighty-eight that year!)

It is in the form of written records—namely, Lovecraft letter files—that we may expect the primary biographical enrichment in the years to come. It may be expected that some of the major letter files, like Kleiner, Morton, Moe, and Long, which are excerpted in *Selected Letters* but not available to researchers at present, will eventually come onto the market in full or part. Hopefully, some of these files will go to university collections when they do become available. As a practical matter, it should not be regretted that the manuscripts and letters of Lovecraft have come to have a substantial value as collector's items; this will for the long run enhance their probability of discovery and survival. In the past fifteen years alone, notable partial files of letters to Clark Ashton Smith, Alfred Galpin, and Robert Bloch have been offered for sale by booksellers (Roy A. Squires, J & S Graphics, and Fantasy Archives, respectively). In addition, letters to Clifford Eddy and Wilfred B. Talman were offered by Irving Binkin as part of the Phillip Jack Grill Lovecraft collection (see Mark S. Owings' catalogue, Mirage Press, 1975). It is only to be expected that collections of Lovecraft material will be sold as personal circumstances change and estates are disposed of, and to deny either the sellers or the buyers their rights to buy and to sell would be a short-sighted position. Lovecraft himself would surely have wished his gifts of letters and manuscripts to benefit his friends and their estates, in the wake of the fame which he never expected during his own lifetime, and a good supply of collectible material is healthy for the growth of his literary reputation. Not every scrap of source material may fairly be hoarded in institutional collections! One hopes, however, that the Arkham House letter transcripts will eventually become available to researchers in a university collection.

The richness of the Brown University Lovecraft Collection, housed in its Special Collections Division in the John Hay Library which abutted Lovecraft's final residence at 66 College Street (now moved to 65 Prospect Street), is already well known. It is the core collection of its kind. All Lovecraftians must owe thanks for the foresight of Lovecraft's young literary executor Robert H. Barlow (1918-1951) in establishing this collection in 1937-42 and for the judgment of then John Hay Librarian S. Foster Damon in accepting this sizeable collection of a then very obscure writer. Over the years this collection, based upon the Lovecraft literary manuscripts given to Barlow during Lovecraft's lifetime and the literary papers left at 66 College Street at Lovecraft's death, together with Lovecraft's letters to his aunts, which he had kept, has grown to include such valuable letter files as those to Barlow, Shea, Toldridge, Rimel, Sully, Price, Cole (Edward), and others. Less well known is the collection of the papers of August Derleth at the Wisconsin State Historical Society in Madison, including his original letters from H. P. Lovecraft. Other surprises exist across the North American continent. In the New York Public Library's Manuscript Division, for instance, may be found Lovecraft's letters to Richard Ely Morse and the original manuscript of "The Horror at Red Hook", which came to the library through Poe scholar Thomas O. Mabbott. Considering the contribution of European criticism to the growth of Lovecraft's reputation, it is to be hoped that a major Lovecraftian research collection will eventually be established in Europe as well. Lovecraft research long ago reached the antipodes—witness the contributions of Leon Stone of Australia and Thomas G. L. Cockcroft of New Zealand. Aside from written material generated by Lovecraft himself and by his associates, primary records undoubtedly still have additional keys to yield to the dedicated Lovecraftian researcher. The present writer fully believes that a Lovecraftian researcher with professional genealogical training could certainly still make new discoveries in records in Rhode Island, New York, and England, concerning Lovecraft and his family. There undoubtedly also remain new discoveries for bibliographers with patience, fortitude, and strong eyes to cope with microfilm and microfiche.

By the next century, Lovecraft will certainly belong to the ages. In all likelihood, his remaining friends and associates will have passed from among us. (If the youngest of his boy editors was born in, say, 1922, we may perhaps assign A. D. 2025 as a *terminus ad quem* for research involving living persons who knew HPL.) By the next century what will finally survive and be available to researchers of the written record will be better known than it is now. Hopefully, at least one of the great files of "amateur" letters—Kleiner, Morton, or Moe—will then be available for research. The next century, in the wake of the Lovecraft centennial in 1990, will be the time for a more careful and considered weighing. The reputation of Lovecraft and his work may grow or it may recede. The only certainty, barring the destruction of our civilization through a nuclear holocaust, is that Lovecraft's life and work will continue to be studied, perhaps by fewer researchers and writers than at present, perhaps by more, but nevertheless studied. One hopes that the basic resources for such research will continue to grow so that the work of the researchers may grow with the resources. The signs are already hopeful. Within the past several years, the heirs of Clark Ashton Smith elected to place his literary papers alongside those of H. P. Lovecraft in the Brown University Library. Had Dr. I. M. Howard chosen the Brown University Library, rather than Howard Payne College, as the site for his son Robert E. Howard's memorial collection, Brown University might today be the happy possessor of the definitive collections



for all three of the "Three Musketeers" of *Weird Tales*, as L. Sprague de Camp described them. (Lovecraft had uncharacteristically saved his letters from Robert E. Howard, and they were actually on deposit for a time at Brown University until Dr. Howard withdrew them to add them to the Howard Payne memorial, whose story Glenn Lord describes elsewhere.) Of the Lovecraft literary manuscripts not given to Robert H. Barlow or owned by Lovecraft at his death, "The Thing on the Doorstep" came to Brown University from Duane W. Rimel in the late 1940s. Of the other major holograph manuscripts of his fiction known to survive, "The Horror at Red Hook" is in the Manuscript Division of the New York Public Library and "The Haunter of the Dark" and "The Shadow out of Time" are believed still to be in private hands. The prognosis for further growth of primary research material during the rest of this century and the next century is thus very hopeful. For himself, the present writer wishes very much that he might have the opportunity to review the *corpus* of work concerning Lovecraft and his work which will be available for his second centennial in A. D. 2090.

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(Continued from page 41)

The Mauran family adds one other interesting note to the background of *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. In the colonial part of the novel mention is made of "the scow *Fortaleza* of Barcelona, Spain, under Capt. Manuel Arruda" (133), which contains some highly peculiar cargo. In fact, Manuel Arruda was not a sea captain but a well-known door-to-door fruit salesman who travelled about College Hill each day. Neighbours who lived there at the time are virtually certain that Lovecraft would have met him while he lived at 10 Barnes Street.

How do all these details help us to understand the novel better? In recent years scholars have discovered that such tales as "The Dunwich Horror" and "The Whisperer in Darkness" analogously incorporate data known to Lovecraft from his wide travels and personal experience. In some senses these details--as here in the case of Manuel Arruda--are utilised in a spirit of fun; but there may be a more serious side to it. Lovecraft repeatedly claimed that as a fiction-writer he was always a

*prose realist* whose prime dependence is on the building up of atmosphere through the slow, pedestrian method of multitudinous suggestive detail & and dark scientific verisimilitude. Whatever I produce must be the sombre result of a deadly, literal seriousness, & almost pedantic approach. The "art" atmosphere is never in my best stuff--instead, there is an impersonal, unsmiling, minutely *reporting* quality somewhere. I have to see a thing or scene with clear-cut visual distinctness before I can say anything whatever about it--then I describe it as an entomologist might describe an insect. (SL III.96)

This makes it clear that the prosaic details of the real world--the real world of Providence, its people and its topography--were of vital importance to Lovecraft, and in fact were necessary to liberate his imagination. The miracle of Lovecraft is his ability to transform commonplace facts into a nightmare web of cosmic phantasy--phantasy which is the more disturbing precisely because it is founded upon unassailable reality.

## The Influence of Two Dunsany Plays

By Norm Gayford

That Dunsany's work influenced Lovecraft's is not in question. Schweitzer, Klein, Joshi and many others over the years have discussed this. Lovecraft acknowledges Dunsany's tales throughout his correspondence, and often at length. Not mentioned nearly as frequently, however, are the one-act plays of Lord Dunsany. Embedded within these plays are images of thematic, perhaps curiously mythic, import. Though Lovecraft apparently considered the plays less important than the short fiction, the influence of two plays bears another look. What we are looking for is how or why these two plays, *The Gods of the Mountain* and *The Glittering Gate*, may affect images in Lovecraft's own work. To do that, we need to reexamine parts of the worldviews or philosophical positions from which Lovecraft and Dunsany work their art. Dunsany's discussion of playwriting, Yeats' introduction to an edition of the plays and Lovecraft's commentary, in addition to mythopoetic criticism on the part of Robert Graves and Joseph Campbell, lead to the possibility that the plays, and thereby the tales which they influence, exude something of mythic significance.

As has been suggested in other places, the cosmic appeal of Lovecraft's work is his fusion of the inside and the outside, the problem of identity, the removing of mythology from the purview of individual cultures and into space itself. His work draws mythic vitality from Greco-Roman, as well as Egyptian/Eastern, elements. Dunsany's *The Gods of the Mountain* may have been attractive to Lovecraft, in part, because of an image which invigorates, focuses, or appeals to Lovecraft's own visualization of that fusion.

In his introduction to *Dagon*, T. E. D. Klein discusses Lovecraft's relationship with Dunsany, but he does not mention the plays. Though he hints at similarities to Dunsany's work in *Dream-Quest*, he does not go into particulars. However, the particulars of parallelism in their artistic views are interesting.

Klein remarks on Lovecraft's lack of characters, as well as Poe's lack of characters.<sup>1</sup> I submit that Dunsany's plays often have little in the way of defined characters. Rather, as Joshi suggests, they are moralistic to the point of allegory, as are some of Lovecraft's self-styled "Dunsanian" tales. When Dunsany talks of plays and playwriting, for instance, he refers to them as "life or time shaped to a certain curve, by means of events, everything that you use in the play going forward towards it."<sup>2</sup> He is interested in events rather than characters, and so, we know, is Lovecraft, for whom mankind, in specific, is unimportant. To Clark Ashton Smith he wrote that the only things worthy of cosmic drama are "basic natural forces and laws", not "dust-grains as negligible as terrestrial men".<sup>3</sup>

The artist's self is unimportant. This is true for Lovecraft and Dunsany, who eschews the intrusion of the artist's personality in a play and asserts that the artist's work is, metaphorically, the work of a dewdrop showing mankind "the whole dome of the sky shines through it" ("Carving" 54-55). The similarity of the metaphors is telling. Speaking of Coleridge, Lovecraft writes

1. T. E. D. Klein, "A Dreamer's Tales", *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales*, by H. P. Lovecraft (1965; rev. ed. Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1986) xxxiv.

2. Lord Dunsany, "The Carving of the Ivory", *The Art of Playwriting: Lectures Delivered at the University of Pennsylvania on the Mask and Wig Foundation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1928, rpt. Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1967) 61. Hereafter cited in the text as "Carving".

3. H. P. Lovecraft to Clark Ashton Smith, 20 November 1931; *Selected Letters*, eds. August Derleth, Donald Wandrei, and James Turner, 5 vols. (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1965-76) III.435.

Bookishness becomes tepid and artificial only when one looks at the books instead of through them. So long as they are utilised only as telescopes, and not worshipped for their mechanical selves, they form very acceptable substitutes for experience . . . (SL II.234)

If the work points man's attention to the void, widens man's tunnel vision, so to speak, the work has value.

Let's consider the particulars of Dunsanian elements in Lovecraft tales of his "Dunsanian" period: the door opened that should have stayed closed, gigantic monoliths, the peasant as blessed, strange music (discussed by Schweitzer, Joshi, et al.). More specifically influenced by *The Glittering Gate* may be Heaven mocking (as in "The White Ship"), and the Gilded Age-style almost muckracking castigation of alcohol producers in "Celephais", along with dead tramps at the feet of cliffs beneath the mansion of, or beneath the bombardment of beer bottles produced by, alcohol vendors.

The Dunsany play which often receives most attention, if passing reference, is *The Glittering Gate*. C. W. E. Bigsby, in his *A Critical Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Drama*, mentions that in 1914 the people who were to later become the Washington Square Players performed Dunsany's *The Glittering Gate* as their "somewhat curious inaugural production".<sup>4</sup> Bigsby points out that the Square Players lacked a unified vision, and were thus not on the prime level of experimental theatre. Still, he thinks the event worthy of note.

What might be taken as "Glittering Gate" allusions litter Lovecraft's early letters. To Frank Belknap Long he asserts the senselessness of tearing down mirages, in the context of the Christian religion (SL I.262). This certainly sounds like what is happening in *The Glittering Gate* when Bill, one of the two companions, forces the supposed Gate of Heaven and finds nothing but a void of stars, and terrible laughter, beyond. Once more to Long he writes: "It is all a jest and a delusion" (SL I.284) almost at the same time as referring to Dunsany. Certainly opening a door to paradise and finding nothing there but a starry abyss and ironic laughter is something of a cruel jest. To Long a month later he talks about the ironic laughter of the great outer gods at disillusioned man (SL I.291). Again, this may well allude, in part, to *The Glittering Gate*.

*The Gods of the Mountain* certainly influences the "green stone idols", the living stone and breathing marble, and the concern with who should be walking at dusk in "The Doom That Came to Sarnath." The emptiness of Christian concepts of an afterlife, and the power of, to use Joshi's term, supra-natural stone: these thematic elements, in part, attract Lovecraft's interest because they parallel, perhaps enliven, his own. They are visualizations of themes which fascinate him.

His derision of many elements of machine-age culture notwithstanding, Lovecraft appreciates the phenomenon of moving pictures. Interestingly enough, he praises moving pictures above most modern theatre. For instance, he writes:

In matters of scenery the moving picture can of course leave the stage far behind; though this hardly atones for the lack of sound and colour. I have been hoping that the collegians would present their Dunsany plays . . . so that you might see the work of this literary giant. (SL I.127)

The image, not the plot, reigns supreme in Lovecraft's estimation. We have seen, and will continue to see, a discussion of the image in his correspondence regarding modern poetry. However, the importance of the image, as we know, goes beyond poetry for Lovecraft. He says, in discussing music with Derleth, "my imagination is almost wholly visual, so that nothing very far removed from the potentially pictorial could make a very big dent in me. I am . . . 'eye-minded'" (SL II.256). This is an important realization on his part. From an educator's point of view, Lovecraft is a visual learner. To F. Lee Baldwin, in a 1934 letter, he discloses, "I have always envied authors who can illustrate their own tales--putting into visibility exactly what they have in mind".<sup>5</sup> He even advises drawing as part of the composition process. To Duane W. Rimel, he writes:

4. C. W. E. Bigsby, *A Critical Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Drama*, I: 1900-1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 8.

5. H. P. Lovecraft to F. Lee Baldwin, 1934, *H. P. Lovecraft: Uncollected Letters* (West Warwick, RI: Necronomicon Press, 1986) 15.

In weird stories involving bizarre monsters and forms of architecture and scenery, it is best to make an explicit (even though crude) sketch of the strange shapes. . . . That's really the only way to be sure of avoiding vagueness and self-contradiction.<sup>6</sup>

Aside from its intrinsic interest, this advice suggests a parallel viewpoint between Lovecraft and Dunsany, one having directly to do with *The Glittering Gate*. That play, says Dunsany, was his first. It was based on a picture he had drawn and someone had asked him to write a play about it ("Carving" 53). Still, Dunsany differs from Lovecraft on the issue of the use of the drawing. For Dunsany, the drawing should have spoken for itself. If an idea expresses itself visually, it need not be done onstage ("Carving" 53).

Given this, we find a notable difference between Lovecraft's and Dunsany's positions. In discussing the art of playwriting, Dunsany lectures about the difficulty of a novelist writing plays. After declaring that novelists sometimes come to playwriting because they think there is more money in the latter, Dunsany says that, unless their writing ability is very good, they fall flat on their faces. The reason: the carpenter [set designer] handles the building and visualization of what amounts to pages of description in prose ("Carving" 50-51). This is as much as to say that a writer whose images are prime, rather than the tale, cannot write successfully for the stage. The prose writer can get "his beauty with his rhythm and very often with the pictures he presents to you of the world" but the dramatist's work is conversational, so that events, rather than word-flow, are the focus of the play ("Carving" 62-63). Dunsany subjugated image to event in plays, which may explain Lovecraft's secondary ranking of those plays. However, event takes primacy over characters for both of them.

Perhaps here Shea's observation, in *Four Decades*, that Lovecraft may have overstated Dunsany's cosmicism and missed some of the latter's "verbal magic" and subtle terror in some of the plays makes sense, though, as Joshi has pointed out, we should not assume that Lovecraft's cosmicism was naive.<sup>7</sup> That Dunsany's plays, by his own admission, work on the premise of event rather than descriptive image, may explain Lovecraft's secondary interest in them. Lovecraft did write, after all, "Plays hold me less than stories, & Dunsany's newer work has less appeal because of the increasing note of visible irony, humour, & sophistication" (SL I.203). However, when one considers the stature which Lovecraft ascribed to Dunsany, one can probably assume safely that Dunsany's plays were more valuable to him than much else that he was reading at the time.

Further, Dunsany's cosmicism is not unlike Lovecraft's, though the former may at first seem to ascribe too much power to humanity's struggle with Destiny for Lovecraft's taste. For instance, during a *New York Times* interview after his arrival in New York in 1919, Dunsany explains: "what matters with me is the condition of man, not in his relation to governments, as they are, or should be, but solely in relation to Destiny"; and speaking immediately of *The Gods of the Mountain*, he clarifies: "Destiny is only a convenient name for the eternal forces that mold man".<sup>8</sup>

Eternal forces may not be so very different from eternal or universal laws, and these are very important to Lovecraft, who knows very well, as Joshi points out in his "Reality and Knowledge", that natural laws themselves cannot be suspended. Nonetheless, Joshi refers to Dunsany as "moralistic" and that is a substantial point of departure between the two.<sup>9</sup> Lovecraft and Dunsany share similar positions when it comes to an explicit, and perhaps implicit, view of modern science, and, as Joshi has discussed, of man's inability to cope with the cosmic unknown which, nonetheless, operates by natural laws that cannot be suspended. In "Reality and Knowledge" Joshi examines what he calls the supra-reality of Lovecraft's tales. That is, Lovecraft wants illusion of natural law suspension while knowing full well that those laws cannot be violated.<sup>10</sup> Dunsany's point of view is very similar. He discusses the use of imaginary events, "but imaginary events that befall in accordance with eternal laws" ("Carving" 61). There is illusion, or the constructs of imagination, and there is science; however, one does not necessarily negate the other. We see this appreciation of the work of scientists, for instance, in Lovecraft's *Uncollected Letters*.<sup>11</sup> Again, in his lecture delivered to the Mask and Wig foundation in 1928, Dunsany proposes that the artist is

6. H. P. Lovecraft to Duane W. Rimel, 19 November 1934, *Uncollected Letters* 35.

7. J. Vernon Shea, "On the Literary Influences Which Shaped Lovecraft's Works", H. P. Lovecraft: *Four Decades of Criticism*, ed. S. T. Joshi (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1980) 135-36.

8. "Dunsany on Art vs. Politics", *New York Times*, 12 October 1919, IX, 3:1.

9. S. T. Joshi, "Reality and Knowledge", *Lovecraft Studies* No. 3 (Fall 1980): 17-27.

10. Ibid.

11. H. P. Lovecraft to the Editor of *The All-Story Weekly*, February 1914, *Uncollected Letters* 2.

somehow greater than the more precise and more exact scientist. The scientist recognizes his limitations and works within them, but the artist is somehow less limited, unless he limits himself by having a conscious theme, which means, of course, working with his intellect. ("Carving" 51)

Further, "there must be far more in his [the artist/writer's] spirit than his intellect can ever discover" ("Carving" 51). The artist moves beyond the scientist in a sort of whimsy or playfulness, if in no other way. Remembering conversations of 1919, in particular with scientist William Beebe, Dunsany writes to Hazel Littlefield Smith that Beebe sometimes "in some of his most scientific passages . . . allude[s] to one of my small gods. . . . I do not know if science becomes more scientific for being contrasted with a bit of pure imagination".<sup>12</sup>

For both, science *is* important; however, for both a piece that begins in science, or is superseded by the scientific attitude, is not art. Remember Lovecraft's remarks about the stream-of-consciousness experiments of Joyce. He does accord grudging, and later perhaps not-so-grudging, respect for the pieces as experimentation, though he disparages them as art. Remember, also, Lovecraft's attack on cheap action tales. Note the architectural reference. He advises Wilfred Blanch Talman

One must not suppose that difficulty of manufacture is equivalent to actual aesthetic expression. It is very difficult to make a watch or calculate the stresses in bridge-building, but the result is not art. It is, instead, applied science. . . . but it has nothing to do with aesthetics. (SL III.427)

Dunsany says that if one uses intellect and cleverness, or ingenuity, to create ideas, then "there will be something scientific about your entire play, something logical, something colder than humanity" ("Carving" 64). Upon arriving in New York City and seeing the Woolworth Tower, Dunsany asks: "Has any artist made use of those graceful lines of steam and smoke?"<sup>13</sup> Ironically, he is finding aesthetic worth within the products of the machine age. There is worth in science, but science itself is not art.

"If you use too much actual fact to patch your dreams with," warns Dunsany regarding the scientifically-created, or completely reality-based, play, "that fact sooner or later is bound to stick out like a piece of rock showing through a wall of dreams" ("Carving" 63). The simile is critical here, because that piece of rock may well be what Lovecraft calls upon when gigantic statues walk in *Dream-Quest*. Dunsany asserts that a play which is "all sheer fact . . . will probably be . . . poor art" ("Carving" 63).

The artist, or the work of the artist, magnifies the universe, but the universe, not the work or the artist, is the important thing. Consider that both men write or say these things within one month of each other, and one sees their philosophical parallelism.

Like Dunsany and Lovecraft, Yeats eschewed the scientific approach to writing. This is very clear in his observations about Dunsany's plays and tales. Immediately after lamenting the missing element of pure Irish legendry in Dunsany's work, Yeats suggests that had Dunsany made an intense study of Irish legendry, his images might have been less rich,

because that prolonged study of a past age, necessary before he could separate them from modern association, would have changed the spontaneity of his mood to something learned, premeditated, and scientific.<sup>14</sup>

Lovecraft, Yeats and Dunsany share this viewpoint.

Schweitzer tells us that Dunsany's walking idols in *The Gods of the Mountain* impressed Lovecraft.<sup>15</sup> This illuminates Lovecraft's choice to summarize, of all Dunsany's works, *The Gods of the Mountain* in his "Supernatural Horror in Literature" when he places the plays as secondary, and when he has all the plays from which to choose.<sup>16</sup>

12. Lord Dunsany to Mrs. Hazel Littlefield Smith, 12 February 1953; Hazel Littlefield, *Lord Dunsany: King of Dreams* (New York: Exposition Press, 1959) 39.

13. "Dunsany on Art vs. Politics", *The New York Times*, 12 October 1919, IX, 1:3.

14. W. B. Yeats, "Introduction" to *Selections from the Writings of Lord Dunsany* (Churchtown, Dundrum: Cuala Press, 1912).

15. Darrell Schweitzer, "Lovecraft and Lord Dunsany", *Discovering H.P. Lovecraft*, ed. Darrell Schweitzer (Mercer Island, WA: Starfont House, 1987) 101.

16. H. P. Lovecraft, *Dagon* 431.

But what is it about animated statues, or moving rocks, which is so attractive? And is this something which intrigued Lovecraft beyond the novelty of Dunsany's play?

A number of things come to mind. We only need return to Greco-Roman myth, the aesthetic value of which Lovecraft often discusses, and the presence of many of its elements in Lovecraft tales (as noted by Jason Eckhardt in "Cthulhu's Scold: Lovecraft and the Nordic Tradition")<sup>17</sup> to find the Argonautic experience of the Symplegades, the moving--or floating, or clashing--rocks which threatened the voyagers.

Could the disturbing motion of the living statues in Dunsany's plays have caught Lovecraft's fancy as an effective suggestion of unnaturalness, or of what humans perceive as natural laws being broken? Mountains coming to life and moving *silently* is an unnatural event. That they move in the dark is all the more disturbing. On the essence of the horrible Lovecraft remarks that it is

unnatural. The thought of a rock walking is not necessarily repulsive, but in Dunsany's *Gods of the Mountain* a man says with a great deal of terror and repulsion, "Rock should not walk in the evening!"<sup>18</sup>

We should note that Yeats quotes the very same line when discussing Dunsany's dexterity with fear-play.<sup>19</sup>

Nor is this Lovecraft's only interest in the power of stone. Consulting the *Commonplace Book* we find disturbing images of stone at least four times. First, he notes an "ancient colossus" with no face (#21) and which Schultz says Joshi has suggested is a working of the Memnon statue. Schultz, as well, suggests both the Sphinx and Ozymandias. Second, he mentions "Man transformed to island or mountain" (#70). The explanation Schultz provides is mentioned above from Lovecraft's *In Defence of Dagon*. Third, he mentions a "talking rock of Africa" (#214).

However, moving rock also suggests that suspension of what Joshi calls supra-natural laws, or perhaps mythic laws. If rock can move, then the old earth gods--Greco-Roman among others--have less power than something else.

Even more powerful is the possible allusion to the tales of the Gorgons, in particular Medusa, whose glance turns men to stone. There is something of this in Dunsany's play *The Gods of the Mountain*, and it does carry over into one of the most powerful images in *Dream-Quest*: the mountain moving silently behind Carter, the ghouls and the gaunts as they are swept toward the castle on Kadath. The narrator tells us

The carven mountains, then, had not stayed squatting in that rigid semicircle . . . with right hands uplifted. . . . But it was horrible that they never spoke, and never even made a sound in walking. (*MM* 393)

Though there is not a turning of people into stone in that novel, the unnatural stone moving at night is horrific, disturbing.

Now, in themselves these suggest the power of this particular image in Lovecraft's imagination. On top of these is at least one entry suggestive of Gorgonish malevolence, as well as identity problems. In entry #42 of the *Commonplace Book*, he mentions "seeing oneself in water or mirror", which Schultz explains, in part, by suggesting that Lovecraft referred to Hawthorne as inspiration for this looking glass theme. Schultz examines its manifestation in four tales. We come out of the examination and the entry itself feeling the power which a creature has if it can die looking into a glass. It can kill what it sees. The Gorgon could do no less.

Dirk Mosig asks, in *Four Decades*, "What is the white bird?" in Lovecraft's "The White Ship". One suggestion might be the Simurgh from the Persian tale. To be succinct, the Simurgh, a great, sometimes frightening revelatory bird which speaks, is a powerful Persian folkloric figure. In some tales, such as "The Conference of the Birds", retold by Firdausi, the Simurgh is that which explorers seek for enlightenment, and when the few find Simurgh, they discover that they are the Simurgh. Like Dunsany's work, Lovecraft's "Dunsanian" tales call upon something of the Oriental, the Eastern, in tone.

When facing the Symplegades, the Argonauts made use of a white bird to test the power of the moving rocks. The bird appears more than once in Lovecraft's tales, though with an undeniable color change. More interestingly, it appears in his *Commonplace Book*. Lovecraft records the idea of a "Talking bird of great longevity--tells secret long afterward" (#120). He also records "Ancient & unknown ruins--strange & immortal bird who *speaks* in a language horrifying & revelatory to the explorers" (#127). Explorers seeking revelation from a bird: certainly there

17. Lovecraft Studies No. 8 (Spring 1984): 25-29.

18. H. P. Lovecraft, *In Defence of Dagon*, ed. S. T. Joshi (West Warwick, RI: Necronomicon Press, 1985) 12; cf. H. P. Lovecraft: *Commonplace Book*, vol. 2, ed. David E. Schultz (West Warwick, RI: Necronomicon Press, 1987).

19. W. B. Yeats, "Introduction".

is a resemblance to the Simurgh tale, and that the individuals questing in the latter discover the Simurgh to be themselves, themselves the Simurgh, is important from the point of view of the identity theme in Lovecraft's work. When the narrator finally pays attention to himself, because of the bird, in "The White Ship", it is too late. At the risk of being summarily reductive, it might be fair to say that the Simurgh is the self, or selves, in another form. That is what Carter encounters through the Gates, and it is the concept "oneself is alien" (p. 11 #187) in Lovecraft's *Commonplace Book*.

That Lovecraft might have thought of the Simurgh, as well as many other possibilities, is not unthinkable. Certainly Lovecraft encountered the Simurgh, allusively, in Beckford's *Vathek*. Cannon, in *Four Decades*, mentions Dunsany's influence along with the Arabian Nights. Lovecraft was not unfamiliar with Eastern, even Oriental (or what was referred to as Oriental in his time) folkloric elements and images. Gilles Menegaldo, in his "The City in H. P. Lovecraft's Work", mentions the Oriental aspect of Lovecraft's dream-city and suggests further that Lovecraft borrows upon Dunsany's visual strength.<sup>20</sup>

Dunsany also called upon the Oriental, the Eastern. This is one of the complaints, if one can call it that, which Yeats brings up in his introduction to the 1912 *Selections from the Writings of Lord Dunsany*. Yeats, when first introduced to Dunsany's work, thought Dunsany could be more useful making the Irish "intellect architectural [underline mine]" if Dunsany concentrated on "old Irish legendary world instead of those magic lands of his with their vague Eastern air".<sup>21</sup>

Architecture surfaces in the discussions of both writers. In "Carving" Dunsany says that dialogue is the bricks of the play, but if dialogue calls too much attention to itself then one sees the bricks and not the beauty of the building (62). In 1924, Lovecraft writes to Frank Belknap Long that towns should be organic, should grow, rather than be built all new (SL I.287), and he tells Frank Belknap Long: "I keep all vivid architectural cuttings now, for I have practically abandoned literary for architectural interests. I find poetry only in breathing wood, brick, stone, and marble . . ." (SL I.313).

Certainly Lovecraft values architecture, finds fascination in it, and links architecture with geology, as his letters to Long attest. Consider what he and Dunsany share on this matter, then, when he writes in the same letter to Clark Ashton Smith of Dunsany's "cosmic range & luxuriant invention" and, later, "I must read more . . . in the geological field. There is material for ineffable phantasy in the rocks & inner abysses of Mother Earth" (SL III.356). The connection is not direct by any means, but I'd like to suggest that part of Lovecraft's attraction to the animated statues in "The Gods of the Mountain" is their metaphorical power. They reflect quite accurately not only the illusion of law-suspension, but also his own fascination with the phantasy potential within rock, soil, earth and human interaction with rock (whether it be wandering within the womb-like stony abysses or growing ancient cities out of rock). "What I really am, is a growth of the soil," he writes Long (SL III.332).

Architecture, especially ancient architecture, is itself the stuff of myth. Architecture is a visual link between cultures, and thereby between mythologies. We have noted Lovecraft's fascination with architecture, and the architectural metaphors employed by Yeats, Dunsany and him. Ancient architecture used stone as its prime material. Moving stone may in some way attract Lovecraft because of the metaphorical suggestion of moving traditions, of one cultural assimilating and building atop another.

Joseph Campbell discusses the importance of stone in Egyptian art and Eastern architecture in his *The Masks of God: Oriental Mythology*. He notes the connection between the Egyptian Pthah priesthood's stone monument works of "intellect, brightness", which was then carried over into Persia, and from there into Buddhist India's Ashoka, or Asoka, period, "one of the greatest sculptural traditions in the history of the world".<sup>22</sup> Campbell's observation sounds remarkably Lovecraftian in tone when he says these works

represent an organic cultural interaction, where the force of an apparently alien tide emanating from an alien center actually carried traits in strong affinity with a long-hidden aspect of the native spiritual past.<sup>23</sup>

One cannot help but think of the thematic inside/outside fascination in Lovecraft's tales and letters. Worked in architecture, stone, already an important symbol for Lovecraft and Dunsany, takes on an altogether mythic importance, for it represents movement and assimilation, concepts of horror for Lovecraft.

20. Gilles Menegaldo, "The City in H. P. Lovecraft's Work", *Lovecraft Studies* No. 4 (Spring 1981): 15.

21. Yeats, "Introduction".

22. Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Oriental Mythology* (1962; New York: Penguin Books, 1974) 92-95, 290.

23. Ibid. 291-92.

We know that Lovecraft believed Yeats to be a poet of prime ability (as Lovecraft comments in letters--and as Burleson has observed most recently). The more we consider Lovecraft's position in the canon of modern Western literature, the more we must examine relationships (whether mythopoetic, philosophical, artistic, thematic, epistolary) between Lovecraft and his contemporaries. Donald R. Burleson's "Swan Songs: Lovecraft and Yeats", which appeared in the previous issue of *Lovecraft Studies*, is a marvelous exploration into just such connections. Burleson tells us that textual interplay occurs quite independent of writers' intentions. As we enter the age of hypertext, or hypermedia, and a recognition of the complex collaborative writing which occurs among writer, reader and text, we realize the importance of these examinations. Yeats, in some sense, is part of the Rosetta Stone linking some of Lovecraft's work [fictional and epistolary] with other moderns. Yeats is one part of the common ground between Dunsany and Lovecraft.

Consider Burleson's intertextual analysis of the Yeats and Lovecraft swan poems. He observes: "The swan . . . is a repository of duplicity, deception, ambiguity . . . uncertainty of identity. The duplicity ranges far beyond the simple fact that the textual swan is always someone else in disguise."<sup>24</sup> The issue of identity is raised here, and that smacks both of the Simurgh--especially considering Carter's multi-faceted experience when confronting the Being in "Through the Gates of the Silver Key"--and the Gorgons, with whom we associate unnatural stone, as discussed by Graves and Campbell.

In *The White Goddess*, Robert Graves probes the mythopoetic power and significance of the Gorgon. Tracing the genealogy of the Welsh/Irish folkloric calendar theme to Egyptian and Greco-Roman roots, he describes a piece of artwork dedicated to the Gorgon myth, and Perseus with his shield next to a scene of the Muses "singing to a lyre near a dolphin-haunted sea"--itself a striking parallel with Lovecraft's description of the haunted oceans in both *Dream-Quest* and "The Temple".<sup>25</sup> Now Graves very carefully explains the connection between the symbolic and the geographic. He associates the Gorgons and the Pillars of Hercules. [As an aside, we should note the importance of Hercules to Lovecraft, who alludes to the demise of the demi-god when he advises Maurice Moe to "fling off like a poisoned garment" artificiality and convention (SL III.344).] The Pillars are themselves linked with the arcane power of language/alphabet, and with cultural identity as it manifests itself through language, according to Graves. He goes on to assert that the head of the Gorgon is an "ugly mask assumed by priestesses on ceremonial occasions" and that there "never was a real Gorgon (as J. E. Harrison was the first to point out)" (Graves 230-31). The priestesses guarded the power of language, and so the Medusa face partially seen in the bag of Perseus is a mask, and its position "symbolizes that the secrets of the alphabet . . . are not to be divulged or misused" (Graves 231). Perseus carries the bag to Tartessus; Milesians carry it to Ireland (Graves 231).

In a very odd way, the Medusan allusion, however tangentially, connects Lovecraft's *Dream-Quest*, Dunsany's *The Gods of the Mountain*, and three folklores or mythologies: the Irish, the Indian/Oriental and the Greco-Roman. We should not ignore the middle of those three, for, as I suggested earlier, there are small allusions to, or perhaps illusive hints of, the sub-continental myth in some Lovecraft work. Campbell suggests that within Kali and Medusa the same opposition exists: life and death.<sup>26</sup>

A small but interesting footnote to all this, considering Burleson's article, is that the Graecae, the elder sisters of the Gorgons, who shared eye and tooth, were also called Phorides and, Graves tells us, are often represented with the forms of swans, which, he says, "is probably an error for cranes, due to a misreading of a sacred picture, since cranes and swans, equally sacred birds [fly in V-formation]" (Graves).

A second footnote regards the basalt pillars which appear in Lovecraft's "The White Ship" and, for a moment, in *Dream-Quest*. Those basalt Pillars of the West represent a gateway of a different sort, the gateway to chaos and gibbering threat off the world. Gilles Menegaldo points out that the "negative cities" of the northern regions in Lovecraft are made of "hard and sombre materials" including basalt.<sup>27</sup> Encyclopedias often refer to the Giant's Causeway as an excellent example of columnar basalt deposits. The Giant's Causeway is located in Ireland. So part of the Yeats/Dunsany connection in Lovecraft's tales, aside from the similarity of tone and occasional image, is the geographic and cultural allusion.

(Continued on page 62)

24. Donald R. Burleson, "Swan Songs: Lovecraft and Yeats", *Lovecraft Studies* No. 18 (Spring 1989): 15.

25. Robert Graves, *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth* (1948; New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966) 223, 231. Hereafter cited in the text as "Graves".

26. Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology* (1964; New York: Penguin Books, 1977) 25.



# *The "Cthulhu Mythos": Between Horror and Science Fiction*

By Thekla Zachrau

Translated by L. G. Boba and S. T. Joshi

[Translation of chapter XI of *Mythos und Phantastik: Funktion und Struktur der Cthulhu-Mythologie in den phantastischen Erzählungen H. P. Lovecrafts* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1986). Translated by permission of the publisher.--Ed.]

I will now attempt to demonstrate the innovative aspects of the Cthulhu stories, along with the unique quality of the mythology. It is not surprising that previous critical commentaries have stressed its affinity to known literary subjects more than anything else,<sup>1</sup> especially since Lovecraft in his correspondence refers specifically to direct influences from Edgar Allan Poe, Lord Dunsany, and Arthur Machen in particular.<sup>2</sup> The merit of Lovecraft's own work, together with critics' recent acknowledgment of it, should serve to indicate the respected place he deserves in the literary world. In recent years, since Lovecraft has been accepted by literary critics, those voices that praise the innovative aspects of the Cthulhu Mythos have been growing in strength, inasmuch as they represent the unique result of a fusion of diverse elements.

Comparison with Edgar Allan Poe's narrative theory and aesthetic shows that, despite clear influence, Lovecraft developed an individual conception. This conception is manifested not only in the variation of narrative technique, but also in the divergent representations of terror, decadence, and death that result from the differing world-views of the two authors.

In contrast to Lovecraft's earlier stories, which still reveal distinct similarities in thematic and/or narrative technique to Poe,<sup>3</sup> the Cthulhu Mythos illustrates a unique treatment. Instead of the psycho-sensual impulse, which

1. Poe's influence on Lovecraft has been studied by, among others, Philip Shreffler (*The H. P. Lovecraft Companion* [Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977], Paul Buhle ("Dystopia as Utopia: Howard Phillips Lovecraft and the Unknown Content of American Horror Literature", *Minnesota Review* n.s. 6 [Spring 1976] 118-31), Fritz Leiber ("A Literary Copernicus", in *Something about Cats and Other Pieces* [Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1949], pp. 290-303), Lin Carter ("Farewell to the Dreamlands", in *The Daam That Came to Sarnath* [New York: Ballantine, 1976], pp. ix-xiv), Donald R. Burleson (*H. P. Lovecraft: A Critical Study* [Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983]), Robert Bloch ("Poe and Lovecraft", in *H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism*, ed. S. T. Joshi [Athens: Ohio University Press, 1980], pp. 158-60), and John Taylor, "Poe, Lovecraft, and the Monologue", *Topic* 31 (1977) 52-62. Nevertheless, all these studies refer to obvious similarities in superficial details, without supplying concrete examples or specific analyses.

2. To mention only a few letters, see SL I.234; 243: SL III.429.

3. The first-person narrator and the construction of the climax in "The Tomb" (1917) are reminiscent of Poe's stories "Berenice" and "Ligeia". Lovecraft's "Memory" (1919) derives definite features of structure and ideas from Poe's "Shadow--A Parable" and "Silence--A Fable". Lovecraft's "The Temple" (1920) is strongly influenced in purpose and narrative form by Poe's "MS. Found in a Bottle", just as "The Outsider" is largely inspired by "The Masque of the Red Death" and "Cool Air" (1926) by "Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar". "The Picture in the House" (1920) and "The Rats in the Walls" (1923) show similarities with Poe's ideas on decadence and perversion; moreover, the narrative structure of both stories is clearly in the Poe tradition. A large part of Lovecraft's tale "The Unnamable" (1923) is a discussion about art, in which the narrator reiterates Poe's theories. Nevertheless, from about 1920 analogies exist only in individual details.

Poe, in the context of the early nineteenth century, believed was effectively attained through the topos of the "death of a beautiful woman";<sup>4</sup> a cerebral horror runs through Lovecraft's modern world-view--the horror of the meaninglessness of man's existence and of cosmic indifference. Characteristically, in the centre of Poe's narratives of fantasy and gloom stands an individual--generally of an artistic temperament--who is driven to isolation and destruction by an exclusive obsession with his own personality. Although Poe's pessimistic picture of the compulsive, driven protagonist throws doubt on man's absolute autonomy, it nevertheless shows his destructive--and self-destructive--tendencies: even the creative impulse can become destructive, as when the delicate balance between intellect and imagination is disturbed. This perversion or destruction is ultimately the product of the individual psyche, and is self-generated. Man proves himself to be the measure of all things. A divine order is assumed, at the top of which stands man who, on the basis of his intellect and creativity, is conceived as godlike; what happens is decided by his own actions.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, Lovecraft sketches a more modern image of man in the form of the isolated investigator who, in a godless world, under the influence of powerful outside forces and robbed of his power as an individual, is exposed to an otherworldly threat (one not a product of biological evolution), whose appearance he has caused through his uncontrollable quest for knowledge. The horror does not find a cathartic resolution in death of the protagonist, as in Poe's tales, but perseveres.<sup>6</sup> Although at the end of the Cthulhu cycle the earthly manifestations of cosmic, indifferent danger are expelled, they nevertheless remain as a dormant threat to humanity. By making concrete and expressive the fear-generating aspects of the Cthulhu Mythos (which is possibly less subtle than Poe's presentation of the complex inner world of his characters), Lovecraft's work may be considered a holdover from the Gothic novel and a precursor of modern science fiction.

The influence of Lord Dunsany, mentioned in recent criticism--e.g. by Lin Carter, Philip Shreffler, Paul Buhle, and Donald R. Burleson<sup>7</sup>--has limited scope and is exclusively concerned with a series of texts produced between 1919 and 1921. In contrast to the Cthulhu cycle, Dunsany's "adult fantasy" is traditional in form and in content is reminiscent of fairy tales. For example, it is repeatedly evident that Dunsany's stories are not reports of alleged or probable events, but are imaginary inventions or dream-pictures, which entertain and instruct the reader through implicit didacticism while awakening in him a sense of the fantastic.

Dunsany's texts, unlike Lovecraft's, are not intended to terrify the reader, but put horror and dread at a psychological distance through their fairy-tale forms and their frequent use of irony. A comparison between Lovecraft's "Celephaïs" and Dunsany's "The Hashish Man" illustrates a typical distinction in the two presentations of horror. Whereas "Celephaïs" ends bitterly with the suicide of the protagonist, Dunsany's narrative concludes without pathos with the laconic remark of the "Hashish Man", "I think it will be a fine night",<sup>8</sup> as he leaps from the window. Finally, vital differences exist between the Cthulhu Mythos and Dunsany's invented pantheon, a pantheon which prompted Lovecraft alone to develop the fundamental idea for the creation of an artificial mythology; conversely, Dunsany's "Gods of Pegana" correspond, in their configuration and relationships, to mankind's traditional notions of mythology.

Comparable reservations are appropriate with regard to the ostensible conceptualization of myth in Arthur Machen's "White People". The correspondence does not lie--as Fritz Leiber, Marion Bradley, and the above-mentioned critics maintain<sup>9</sup>--in the similarity of their mythic systems: Machen's creations are of a nymphlike essence derived from the realm of the occult<sup>10</sup> and black magic, and have clear sexual associations. Rather, the similarity lies in the social function that the mythology performs, and in the concept of an amoral ethic which lies at the foundation of that mythology. Both authors conceal in their mythologies the conviction, propagated through decadence, that good and evil in their pure, absolute forms as intellectual concepts are worthless; hence action is always relative, measured in a social context. Man could free himself from the boundaries of his human existence through "sinful" offenses against the universally accepted order--if only that order would remain absolute enough. Indeed, Lovecraft's

4. Cf. Poe's "Philosophy of Composition", in *Selected Writings*, ed. David Galloway (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 486.

5. Man himself renders justice and reinstates order in "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Black Cat"; he metes out punishment like a god in "The Cask of Amontillado"; he hopes to defeat Death through his own will in "Ligeia".

6. On this point see Francis Lacassin, "Lovecraft et les trous de la toile peinte", *L'Herne* 12 (1969) 106-10.

7. Op. cit.

8. "The Hashish Man", in *Gods, Men and Ghosts*, ed. E. F. Bleiler (New York: Dover, 1964), p. 161.

9. Op. cit.

10. Machen's biographers refer to his mysticism and inclination toward the occult; see, among others, Philip Van Doren Stern, "Introduction" to Arthur Machen, *Tales of Horror and the Supernatural* (New York: Pinnacle, 1976), and Robert Hillyer, "Arthur Machen", in ibid.

protagonists do not succeed in obtaining this degree of absoluteness. In contrast to Lovecraft, Machen advocates a mythical occultism, which he seeks to attain in the ecstasy of transcendence. Still, the answer of the narrator in the epilogue to "The White People", to the question of whether he believes that the protagonist actually had supernatural powers and communicated with paranormal powers, speaks for both authors: "No, for me, it is the 'story' not the 'sequel', which is strange and awful, for I have always believed that wonder is of the soul."<sup>11</sup>

Finally, there are specific subjects and themes which have been inspired by the work of other fantasy writers, some of whom Lovecraft himself names.<sup>12</sup> For example, there is the idea concocted in Algernon Blackwood's well-known tale, "The Willows",<sup>13</sup> that Nature has a soul and that man may not cross certain specified bounds, lest he suffer torments from contact with unknown psychic and physical realms; it is the same with names and details in Ambrose Bierce's "An Inhabitant of Carcosa"<sup>14</sup> and Robert Chambers' short-story cycle *The King in Yellow*.<sup>15</sup> These parallels surely persist on the surface, although the stories of the latter-named authors present an alternate world-view. Further, in addition to the previously discussed points, there is in the Cthulhu Mythos a conglomeration of ideas, including some from modern science (especially concepts of space and time), as well as others from sagas and legends, as for example *The Arabian Nights*.

The enumeration of diverse influences should show that Lovecraft's mythology is in no way a derivative imitation of earlier authors, but rather incorporates differing elements and transforms them into a unique mythology, resulting in a completely distinct form of fantasy fiction that lies between psychological horror fiction and science fiction.

### 1. Parallels and Differences with Science Fiction

There are three thematic characteristics that are especially responsible for placing the Cthulhu Mythos in the realm of science fiction: the protagonist's thirst for knowledge and the (pseudo-)scientific methodology of his investigation; the ever-changing use of technology; and, above all, the configuration of the otherworldly Cthulhu-creation. For a long time numerous critics failed to make the distinction between fantasy and science fiction<sup>16</sup> with regard to these aspects, and so labelled Lovecraft's work "science fiction".<sup>17</sup> Such a labelling, however, completely overlooks important differences between the latter genre and the fantasy of the Cthulhu cycle; as Sam Moskowitz states in *Explorers of the Infinite: Shapers of Science Fiction*, these differences make it an original form: "Perhaps Lovecraft's most important single contribution was the adoption of science fiction material to the purpose of supernatural terror."<sup>18</sup> Michel Butor expresses a similar opinion; he criticised science fiction for lacking originality and recommended that a uniform modern mythology for science fiction be created. He refers to Lovecraft in this connection:

Nevertheless, in order to make things somewhat credible, the strange must today be described in the same manner as if man were to encounter a life-form on another planet. In this way all stories about ghosts and devils can be incorporated into science fiction, all those old legends about higher beings who play a part in the life of man. Certain of Lovecraft's stories are an illustration of this possibility.<sup>19</sup>

11. Arthur Machen, "The White People", in *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 116.

12. Lovecraft mentions the following authors in many letters, among them SL II.209-11, 148.

13. *Best Ghost Stories of Algernon Blackwood*, ed. E. F. Bleiler (New York: Dover, 1973), pp. 1-52.

14. *The Collected Writings of Ambrose Bierce*, ed. Clifton Fadiman (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1972), pp. 532-35.

15. New York: F. Tennyson Neely, 1895.

16. An early, if much criticised, differentiation may be found in Tzvetan Todorov, *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* (1970), tr. as *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1973). See also Roger Caillois, "Das Bild des Phantastischen: Vom Märchen bis zur Science Fiction", in *Phaicon 1: Almanach der phantastischen Literatur*, ed. Rein A. Zondergeld (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1974), pp. 44-83; Darko Suvin, "Zur Poetik des literarischen Genres Science Fiction", in *Science Fiction: Theorie und Geschichte*, ed. Elke Barmeyer (Munich: Fink, 1972), pp. 86-104; and Reimer Jehmlich, "Phantastik-Science Fiction-Utopie: Begriffsgeschichte und Begriffsaufgrenzung", in *Phantastik in Literatur und Kunst*, ed. Christian W. Thomsen and Jens Malte Fischer (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980), pp. 11-33.

17. Gero von Wilpert's description of Lovecraft as a "forerunner of science fiction" is relatively precise. See *Lexicon der Weltliteratur: Autoren* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1975).

18. *Ibid.*, p. 259.

19. "Die Krise der Science Fiction", in *Science Fiction: Theorie und Geschichte*, p. 81.

The uniqueness of the Cthulhu stories lies, as stated earlier, in Lovecraft's underlying views of man and the world as well as in the intention and manner of his narration, and constitutes a point of comparison with one of the fundamental characteristics of science fiction. "Serious" science fiction is by definition<sup>20</sup> founded—even when it is a dystopia—on the belief in the importance of mankind and the significance of intellect, where progress or change in an orderly universe is possible. Contrary to the basic premise of fantasy, which keeps one world hidden within the empirical real world, science fiction treats the universe as a uniform system, in which the planet earth *coexists* with other worlds. Striving to alter consciousness, science fiction, as a "speculative prose form",<sup>21</sup> often engenders alarming—or at least unusual—alternatives, albeit represented rationally, and above all, through its implicit didacticism, makes a claim for the relevance of the real world. On the other hand, fantasy—and Lovecraft in particular—intends pure aesthetic pleasure and the compensatory effect of literature. In these divergent intentions lie the distinct social functions of the two genres. Moreover, since fantasy is characterised by possibility, it may overstep conventional moralistic bounds with impunity for the purpose of producing horror and paranoia. To that end it is necessary to achieve ambiguity concerning a theory of life and the use of a new and contemporary literary style, and so Lovecraft brings the technical mechanism of science fiction to bear. Whereas technology in science fiction illustrates fundamental beliefs in progress and scientific knowledge, in the Cthulhu Mythos it becomes a threat and serves to strengthen the vacillation between rationality and irrationality. This explains another attitude concerning the Unknown about which Lovecraft writes:

I would try to achieve what all other interplanetary writers blithely & deliberately reject—namely, the sense of awesome, utter & almost mind-unhinging *tremendousness* implicit in the very notion of transportation to another world either in body or in mind. . . . *This feeling* would be the *central element* of any interplanetary story of mine; indeed, the whole thing would be more of a psychological study than an adventurous narrative—more a Poe-effect than a H. G. Wells or Jules Verne effect.<sup>22</sup>

The marked difference in Theodore Sturgeon's authoritative definition of science fiction now becomes meaningful: "A science fiction story is a story built around human beings, with a human problem, and a human solution, which would not have happened at all without its scientific content."<sup>23</sup> The Cthulhu Mythos does not hinge primarily on human beings with human problems, for which there is a human solution, but is ultimately concerned with an insurmountable fear regarding the destruction of the familiar laws of Nature, for which no solution is to be found.<sup>24</sup>

## 2. Transformation of the Gothic Novel

In the previous discussion concerning the tenacity of horror, which represents the modern development of the theme of literary "Angst", we also find an important deviation from the Gothic novel.<sup>25</sup> In the Gothic novel the solitary figure is in danger and a well-ordered world is under attack; we see this also in the Cthulhu stories in the form of a global threat to all humanity and the world at large, an idea that reflects the altered position of the individual in the late twentieth century. In an era marked by highly developed scientific and technological advancements, in which the abundance of knowledge threatens to undermine traditional values, man finds himself confronted with the uncertainty of his own existence. This anxiety about his own position is made worse by opposing ideological currents, such as capitalism and communism, both of which, although different in approach, call the autonomy of the individual

20. Cf. David L. Allen, *Science Fiction Reader's Guide* (Lincoln: Centennial Press, 1974), p. 226: "A second constant, which is basic to both science and science fiction, is the assumption that we live in an orderly universe. This idea is important since it means that the causes of the changed conditions can be discovered and explained and that the results will be regular and, within limits, predictable."

21. See Vera Graff's definition of science fiction in Barmeyer, ed., *Science Fiction: Theorie und Geschichte*, p. 10.

22. SL III.95.

23. Cited in Barmeyer.

24. In this regard see also Gérard Klein, "Entre le fantastique et la science-fiction: Lovecraft", *L'Herne* 12 (1969) 47-74. I am indebted in many ways to his ideological interpretation of Lovecraft's tales as lying between the Gothic novel and science fiction, although he interprets the stories in an excessively Marxist manner, so that in his interpretation Lovecraft becomes a critic of the capitalist system.

25. The following comparison is above all based on the criteria for the Gothic novel established by Devendra P. Varma (*The Gothic Flame* [London: Russell & Russell, 1966]) and Horst Conrad (*Die literarische Angst: Das Schreckliche in Schauerromantik und Detektivgeschichte* [Düsseldorf: Bertelsmann, 1974]).

into question, rendering him an object.<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, the universe in Lovecraft's stories is much like a Gothic castle complete with subterranean vaults and trapdoors, behind which lurk non-anthropocentric forces. Corresponding to a nihilistic and materialistic world-view, this universal threat of a personified greater power is encountered in the form of a villain's pursuit of an innocent young girl. Whereas the danger in a Gothic novel comes from the evil hunger of a miscreant for unconditional power,<sup>27</sup> danger is aroused in the Cthulhu Mythos through the (morally innocent?) thirst of the victim for absolute knowledge. A further characteristic aberration is that the Gothic novel often takes its theme from repressed sexual desire, while the Cthulhu stories are concerned with an insatiable craving after knowledge. Lovecraft's emphasis on *homo rationalis*<sup>28</sup> prevails throughout, so that although at first glance the protagonists' overreaction may appear similar to conventional horror fiction, frequently their minds recoil when faced with the horror. To that extent Lovecraft's work differs from its forerunners, for Gothic characters experience overexcitement in the emotional and sensual realm, while figures in the Cthulhu cycle (occasionally) lose their intellectual faculties. Furthermore, unlike Gothic fiction or traditional fantasy literature, it is characteristic of the Cthulhu stories that order, once disturbed, is never restored at the end, for the fantastic element proves in this amoral naturalistic universe not to become "rectified chaos",<sup>29</sup> but remains forever in the unfathomable creation of Cthulhu.

Finally, parallels with works such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* or Bram Stoker's *Dracula* point out a distinct difference in attitude toward horror. Whereas in the latter terror in the guise of natural science (in the sense of enlightenment) is mythologised, Lovecraft's fiction reactivates terror in a "mythology of natural science", in which we are taken a step further and myths are created anew. This does not mean that *Frankenstein* or *Dracula* may not be interpreted as variations on classical myths. Mary Shelley's fictional world reflects fear of the potential dangers of secularised science, which man abuses in sacrilegious ways in an effort to elevate himself to the position of godlike creator, and so Shelley places *homo rationalis* in the spotlight, around whom a finite universe revolves. The Cthulhu Mythos, a reflection of the modified world-view characteristic of the twentieth century, illustrates the horror that comes as a result of scientific knowledge: a godless world, in which man possesses neither the ability to create nor the power to control, where he is no more in relation to the infinite cosmos than an insignificant, barren branch on the ultimately cyclical tree of evolution.

### 3. The Cthulhu Mythology

It is understandable that many critics see Lovecraft's real accomplishment in his creation of the mythological Cthulhu world. One school of commentators, such as Lin Carter, Gérard Klein, Fritz Leiber, or Sam Moskowitz, consider it to be a superb synthesis of traditional subjects with the extra-terrestrial nature of science fiction. David Ketterer speaks for this group of critics with the following statement: "... it is the alien-manipulator gambit that accounts for the science-fictional dimension in H. P. Lovecraft's work. ... It is the Mythos itself, the novelty and possibility of the concept, that gives substance to much of Lovecraft's output."<sup>30</sup> Against the background of psychological theory, the French critics Maurice Lévy, Hélène Tuzet, Napoleon Murat, and Hubert Juin, to name only a few, interpret the Cthulhu creation as a literary transformation of the sort of visions that occur in dreams.<sup>31</sup> Lévy's interpretation of this aspect differs significantly from the others in that he postulates a close connection between

26. Different interpretations of the Cthulhu Mythos--such as David Ketterer's, who speaks of the "alien-manipulator gambit" (*New Worlds for Old: The Apocalyptic Imagination, Science Fiction and American Literature* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday/Anchor, 1974]), and Gérard Klein's notion of the threat to individual autonomy through capitalism, as well as Todorov's belief that "normal" man becomes "a fantastic entity"--coincide significantly in reference to the position of the individual.

27. The possible objection that in the Gothic novel the danger is brought about through the behaviour of the female victim is plausible only from a modern psychological perspective.

28. Lovecraft defined man above all as *homo sapiens*, a being distinguished by reason and intelligence. This view is especially prominent in *At the Mountains of Madness*, when the narrator, referring to the entirely non-human Old Ones, says: "Poor devils! After all, they were not evil things of their kind. They were the men of another age and another order of being. ... They had not been even savages--for what indeed had they done? ... and poor Old Ones! Scientists to the last--what had they done that we would not have done in their place? God, what intelligence and persistence! What a facing of the incredible, just as those carved kinsmen and forbears had faced things only a little less incredible! Radiates, vegetables, monstrosities, star-spawn--whatever they had been, they were men!"

29. Georges Jacquemin, "Über das Phantastische in der Literatur", in *Phaïcon 2: Almanach der phantastischen Literatur*, ed. Rein A. Zondergeld (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1975), p. 46.

30. Ketterer, pp. 261f., esp. p. 263.

31. This list can be extended.

dream-visions and traditional myth in Lovecraft's stories.<sup>32</sup> His argument is based on the psychoanalytical and anthropological premises that both mythical images and dreams are reflections of wish-fulfilment, that both perform the function of giving vent to these wishes, and that both are grounded in a structure of archetypes, manifested by similar images. Against the background of Mircea Eliade's conception of a primitive state of perfection,<sup>33</sup> Lévy regards the Cthulhu Mythos as an attempt at a mythological return to the idyllic dawn of time. Lévy considers the sources of fear in the Cthulhu mythology to be, on the one hand, the projection of personal anxieties and, on the other hand, an inversion, firmly grounded in Lovecraft's own agnosticism, of the traditional Christian mythos.<sup>34</sup> In this quasi-sacrilegious interpretation the individual therapeutic aspect is at times overemphasised, and at other times Lovecraft's scientifically based cosmic view is disregarded completely, although Lévy's application of Eliade's conception of mythology is convincing and leads this enquiry in a different direction.

As a result of current research, a third, new possible interpretation has been crystallised. In the world of Cthulhu, the construct of a superhuman but conceptually natural evolutionary system takes the place of a mythical cosmogony with its supernatural entities. This symbolises the mythologising power of a naturalistic world-view in which cosmic evolution is no longer purposeful or teleological, but is ultimately arbitrary, yet of an all-encompassing causality. These mythic dimensions will once again enable this materialistic and godless world-picture to approach the rationalistic demands of science in the irrational context of weird fantasy. The mythologising unfolds on various levels. On the surface of the narrative it is manifested through the deliberate association and synthesis of biological and physical theories with mythical and magical ideas. On an underlying conceptual level the animistic world-view that defines mythic thought is replaced by a system of historical evolution. It is not that impersonal natural processes take the place of ghosts and spirits, which the traditional mythical world animates and whose pandeterminism and causality it substantiates, but on the contrary there are supernormal creations which populate the universe. Their supernatural abilities and their evolutionary history make a mythical world-view possible--one in which the totality of the universe is seen as a single cohesive unity, within which man is inseparably interwoven and which, in the final analysis, is based on him. The apparent meaning which the Cthulhu stories attribute to the human spirit significantly corroborates Freud's assertion that "in trusting to the power of the human spirit, which copes with the laws of reality, there is preserved a fragment of primitive belief in the omnipotence of thought",<sup>35</sup> which is a characteristic of mythic thought. On this point the mythical and the fantastic view of the universe coincide inasmuch as both deny chance. In its place, direct connections are assumed between all phenomena, and it is supposed that for the most part they elude man. This attitude is clearly evident in Lovecraft's fiction, when the narrator reconstructs, step by step, the relationships which he could not perceive at first, and whose coherence he seeks to deny, until finally he is confronted by the shocking truth: a universal causality which has forsaken him and left him helpless.

In addition, these frightening myths from an archaic and highly developed culture--significant for the dialectical movement of the Mythos between "terror and poetry"--imply the compensatory presentation of an ideal world, the sort which in primitive, ancient, or Christian creation-myths was peopled in an untainted past. Against this background, the Cthulhu Mythos represents an innovative process, one phase of which matches Mircea Eliade's description of the development of ontology upon history. The ontological myth of origin shows a "static" picture of a once perfect universe which may be traced back to an all-powerful, immortal creator.<sup>36</sup> This idea is replaced in history and, accordingly, in the secularised Cthulhu mythos by the concept of an organic development or, as Eliade demonstrates in the following description, which shows a noteworthy analogy to the world of Cthulhu:

... it [History] is the result of a drama acted out by the Ancestors of men and by Supernatural Beings different in type from the all-powerful, immortal Creator Gods. These Divine Beings are subject to changes in modality; they "die" and become something else, but this "death" is not an annihilation, they do not perish once and for all, but survive in their creations.<sup>37</sup>

32. Lévy, *Lovecraft ou du fantastique* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1972), p. 173. On the relation of myth and dream see also G. S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 268-74.

33. Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), esp. pp. 75-79.

34. Lévy, *Lovecraft*, p. 166.

35. Freud, *Totem und Tabu* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1977), p. 94.

36. Cf. Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, Chapter 6: "Mythology, Ontology, History", pp. 92-113.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

Two opposing phases are at work in Lovecraft in a reversal of history renewed with an ontological mythos, which follows through the transfer into a context of fantasy. Because of this, as is often the case, a rational-causal concept of evolution is established through a pandeterministic or, as the case may be, animistic one. In this mechanism lies the foundation for the actual myth-producing process. This is illustrated by the world-view concealed throughout the mythology, a view which finds expression in the opening passage of "The Call of Cthulhu" and holds true as a motto for the entire Cthulhu Mythos:

The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age.

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(Continued from page 55)

On top of that, Heinrich Zimmer, as edited by Campbell, discusses the cultural and artistic importance of the royal Asokan columns, or pillars. Zimmer/Campbell note that some are at Sarnath, a semiotic curiosity in itself and, coincidence or not, worth mentioning.<sup>28</sup> Pushing coincidence to its limit, perhaps, we also note that on the same page as an article on Dunsany's visit to New York in October of 1919 entitled "Lionizing a Lord in Grand Street" (*The New York Times Magazine*, 26 October 1919, IV:6) is a poem entitled "The Fountains of Ashokan" in honor of the aeration of New York's water supply.

Again, it would be wrong to read universes into these bits and pieces. They are curiosities. Taken together, however, they may support the suggestion that Lovecraft's connection with Dunsany and, to some degree with Yeats, goes beyond reworked images, and resonates with folkloric, perhaps mythic, power, however coincidental the allusions. Lovecraft's Dunsanian tales owe this much, at least, to Dunsany's plays.

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27. Menegaldo.

28. Heinrich Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia: Its Mythology and Transformations*, Vol. I: Text, compiled and edited Joseph Campbell (1955; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) 231-32.

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### Briefly Noted

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As part of its celebration of fifty years of publishing, Arkham House will publish a revised edition of *Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos*, edited by James Turner. Turner has added a new introduction, omitted some stories from the original edition (those by J. Vernon Shea, Brian Lumley, and James Wade), and added stories by Fritz Leiber, Brian Lumley, Joanna Russ, Karl Edward Wagner, Philip Jose Farmer, Stephen King, and Richard A. Lupoff. The volume should be available by January 1990.

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## *What of H. P. Lovecraft?*

or, *A commentary upon J. B. Michel*

By Autolycus

[Reprinted from *The Science Fiction Fan* 4, No. 6 (Whole Number 42) (January 1940) 11-15.—Ed.]

I, too, never knew Lovecraft. Though I have read his masterpieces of darkling fantasy, abhorrent evil and loathsome cults, though I have followed his gigantic strides toward the goal he finally reached—genius—, though I have been a humble admirer since his works first appeared in *Weird Tales* some fifteen years ago (I had already been through the First World War and three other campaigns when the first issue of *Weird* startled a realism weary world,—and that should date me as one of the oldest fans), yet I admired from afar and could not summon up courage even to write to one of the most amazing phenomena ever to enter American literary history.

Perhaps it was best that way. At times I deeply regret not having met Lovecraft face to face or to have had the honor of receiving one of his inestimable letters, yet perhaps it is best that I can view his writings dispassionately, as literature, without being dazzled by the aura of his personality. In this way, I can tilt a lance with J. B. Michel without a feeling of personal rancor. I am no sycophant, no Boswell.

To what does Michel object his article on Lovecraft, appearing in the November FAN? Let me quote in part:—"Lovecraft was the deadly enemy of all that to me is everything—gazing with suppressed hate upon a great new world which placed more value upon the sanitary condition of a bathroom fixture than all the greasy gold and jewels, etc.—".

As I read it, Michel is disturbed and angered, not by Lovecraft the master of fantasy and horror, not by Lovecraft the alchemist who made words glow with a supernal light, but by a Lovecraft whose interest was in the past, in the imagination, rather than in the present or in the (we hope) glories of the future. In other words Michel condemns Lovecraft for not taking his place in the hurly-burly of today, and thus we are brought face to face with the most discussed, most troublesome problem of modern literature. Shall all writing be class conscious, or shall the occasional man of letters be permitted to remain in his ivory tower and send out to the world below words of beauty and glamor? Shall all feel toward the recluse as Auden does toward Housman in his famous (or infamous) poem beginning

No one—not even Cambridge—was to blame.  
Or shall we permit the poet, the wizard of words,  
A leeway not granted other mortals?

There are two answers. The first is obvious, that is, the man of genius will write what his inmost being generates and impel outward his deepest thoughts, without regard to the clamor or disdain of the crowd. Villon from a dunghill sang of purity and truth. (Of course he sang of other things too.) Poe from madness gave forth unsurpassed words of mystery and terror. Cervantes from prison sent forth his romance of the simple but lovable knight. Yes, the man of genius will write as he chooses; neither contempt nor fear will persuade him to be false to his urge.





## *In Search of Arkham Country Revisited*

By Will Murray

In *Lovecraft Studies*, Fall 1986, I revealed the results of my extensive researches into the true origins of many of H. P. Lovecraft's mythical Massachusetts' towns, pointing out, and I hope proving, that Innsmouth was not simply Newburyport, but Newburyport and nearby Gloucester combined, Dunwich is not really to be found in the Wilbraham area, but is that area moved north to the Swift River Valley--now the site of the Quabbin Reservoir--and probably identical to the now-submerged town called Greenwich, and Kingsport is really Marblehead and Rockport melded together.

The pattern of Lovecraft's creative splicing of two locales to get one fictional reality seemed not to extend to the fabled Arkham, central to Lovecraft's Massachusetts-based stories. I did point out that Arkham *did* exist in two places, the original pre-1930 Arkham of the Swift River Valley and the coastal Arkham which had apparently been recreated and moved to the Salem/Danvers area because of the impending damming of the Swift River in order to create the Quabbin Reservoir.

When I finished "In Search of Arkham Country" three years ago, it was with a nagging sense that my Arkham theories were unresolved. I had made, I felt, a good case for the Swift River Valley hamlet of Oakham being the seat of the original Arkham as it existed before Lovecraft magically replanted it. But this theory did not share the same splicing effect with HPL's other locales. Oh, Lovecraft had for years claimed that Arkham was loosely based on Salem, host for the infamous Salem witch trials. But inasmuch as that city seemed to fit only the latter-day transplanted Arkham, that left but one source for the pre-Mythos Arkham as it was chronicled in stories written prior to 1929.

That sense of inconclusiveness, as it turned out, lasted only as long as it took for Necronomicon Press to publish "In Search of Arkham Country".

For within days of that issue of *Lovecraft Studies* arriving in my mailbox, the *Boston Globe* ran in its Travel Section for October 26, 1986, a curious piece entitled, "Setting the Scene for Horror: H. P. Lovecraft's Massachusetts," by Ruth E. Gruber.

I don't know who Ruth E. Gruber is, but although she confesses to having discovered Lovecraft at age fifteen, her knowledge of Lovecraft's Massachusetts--even in terms of what was accepted prior to "In Search of Arkham Country"--is shaky at best. Consider this assertion:

In addition to "real" settings, Lovecraft came up with an imaginary Massachusetts, and Massachusetts is the heart of "Lovecraft Country." Key landmarks were the Miskatonic River and spooky Arkham, Kingsport and Innsmouth, based on Salem--the site of the infamous witch persecutions of 1692--Marblehead and other old Massachusetts seaports.

Forgiving her mixing up Arkham and Innsmouth for the moment, the thrust of Gruber's article is a recounting of her search for the true inspiration for Dunwich--impelled no doubt by the fact that her first Lovecraftian encounter was with "The Dunwich Horror"--which she claims to have found. Gruber repeats Lovecraft's assertion that Dunwich was inspired by three Pioneer Valley villages--Wilbraham, Hampden, and Monson--but quickly comes to the

conclusion that they are not really Dunwich and looks north to the Quabbin Reservoir area for her Dunwich, using the town of Whately as a focus point--although she erroneously postulates the Connecticut River is the true Miskatonic.

As Gruber describes the region:

It is a beautiful, and in places almost wild, region, well off the beaten tourist track and scarcely mentioned in most New England guides. It is a region dotted with long-abandoned farmsteads, lonely churches and centuries-old graveyards, depopulated villages and rusting road signs.

Humpbacked hills, such as Tully Mountain near Orange, resemble Lovecraft's Round Mountain and Sentinel Hill. Isolated farmhouses, some abandoned or in disrepair, have stood for generations. The Quabbin, a mysterious world of water, stretches out between low wooded islets and irregular marshy coves. The woods hide old stone fences denoting one-time fields, and some roads are still unpaved. Tiny villages cluster around village greens.

Not far from college towns such as Amherst and Northampton, the region was a mecca for hippies seeking to get away from it all in the 1960s and '70s. Numerous communes were established, and some of the local towns are still considered strongholds of counterculture.

Visitors from elsewhere in the state have described the area as a "time warp," and even local boosters can't dismiss the isolation. The guidebook, "North of Quabbin," terms the villages "the forgotten cousins of larger or better-publicized Massachusetts communities."

Gruber seizes upon the town of New Salem as the focal point of Lovecraft country. It's a place she describes this way:

It was the village hardest hit by the construction of the reservoir, though it had already suffered during the farm population upheavals. In the 1820s, it boasted 2,150 people. Today, there are about 700, and New Salem, though affluent, almost looks like a ghost town.

Two graceful white churches, standing side by side, point spires toward the sky and dominate New Salem's village green, but only one of them is in regular weekly use. Nearby, tombstones carved with bizarre, otherworldly faces and plant motifs crowd a graveyard dating back more than two centuries.

Across the way, another white, churchlike building stands empty, near a massive Victorian stone hall, also empty, and another large structure. They are all that remain of New Salem Academy, a once-prominent school founded in 1795 and closed down a number of years ago.

Down the main street along the green, a huge, ramshackle house sits empty, waiting to be sold, like a haunted house in a movie.

A feminist bookstore keeps the faith with the '60s, and a tiny regional museum (open on a limited schedule during the summer only), one of several in the area, occupies a 170-year-old house and barn that would fit right into Dunwich.

It's a quiet town. The few cars look too big for the streets. Even crunching into a local crisp apple seems to make a lot of noise. Ghosts could easily inhabit the empty buildings: ghosts from the drowned Quabbin towns, ghosts from New Salem's more lively past. Or from a writer's imagination.

At one side of the green, a battered sign warns--could it be against a Lovecraftian lurking menace?--"NOT A PUBLIC ROAD. DANGEROUS," even though there is no road in sight."

Gruber wasn't far off when she focused on New Salem, for it is virtually next door to the now-drowned town of Greenwich, which I believe to be Dunwich. Greenwich sits 150 feet under the Quabbin, as it has since April 27, 1938, when, along with Enfield, Dana and Prescott, it was abandoned while its sad, displaced erstwhile inhabitants sang "Home Sweet Home" at the Farewell Ball.

But as for New Salem being Dunwich, Gruber is mistaken, albeit amazingly close to the truth. Despite this error, her article inadvertently handed me the final piece of the Arkham puzzle. It was embedded in a single paragraph that ran:

New Salem--founded by settlers from Salem itself--just 40 years or so after the 1692 witch hunts--lies only a mile from Quabbin's shore. Three main roads lead from its common dead-end at the water.

Prior to my writing "In Search of Arkham Country", I had spent many hours poring over maps and books of that region ever since that fortuitous evening when S. T. Joshi and I first looked at a road atlas of that area trying to find a hypothetical namesake for the original Arkham--which I had determined from a close reading of Lovecraft was well inland of Salem--and I stumbled upon the suggestive name Oakham. I had been looking for a second city which might have informed Lovecraft's original Arkham. Finding none, I simply assumed the inland Arkham was actually Oakham with possibly a dash of Salem added for atmosphere.

But there was one tantalizing fact Lovecraft mentioned in "The Colour out of Space" that continued haunted me all through the writing of "In Search of Arkham Country". And it was the note that Arkham had been settled by descendants of the Salem witches who fled Salem in 1692. It's a scrap of background Lovecraft also attached to nearby Dunwich/Greenwich in "The Dunwich Horror". The fact that Lovecraft saw fit to mention it twice seemed very significant to me and I believed it meant something more than mere historical window dressing. I subsequently researched numerous records pertaining to Oakham in vain for any such mention. Finding none, I finished my article.

Although I was aware of the town of New Salem, and mentioned it in my piece, the now-obvious completely eluded me--perhaps because I was searching for something hidden. It's clear to me now, thanks to Ruth E. Gruber's confused but well-intentioned article, that the original Arkham was not simply Oakham after all--although it was obviously named after Oakham.

Arkham is in fact New Salem!

Consider: New Salem is much closer to Shutebury--the apparent doublet for Lovecraft's Aylesbury--than is Oakham, if it abuts it. Yet it's even further away from Bolton, an actual Massachusetts town which Lovecraft places very close to Arkham in "Herbert West--Reanimator". But then, Lovecraft always did have a peculiar tendency to compress distances, even in real life.

The identification of New Salem with Arkham also clears up another nagging mystery. Lovecraft scholars have long been puzzled by the lack of true-life basis for Arkham University in Salem, and there is none of Oakham. New Salem Academy, however, might just be that elusive institution. It was closed in 1970.

It's also interesting to note that both New Salem and Greenwich were stops on the old Athol to Springfield train line, along with the suggestively named Soapstone. (Remember the soapstone artifacts in *At the Mountains of Madness*?) Lovecraft probably discovered New Salem and Greenwich during one of his many train journeys to the Athol home of W. Paul Cook in the late 1920s. The line had its last regular run on June 1, 1935, whereupon New Salem Station was dismantled. Since Arkham first appears in the 1920 story, "The Picture in the House", years before Lovecraft first traveled to Athol, it must be assumed that originally there was no distinct prototype for Arkham--at least one inspired by first-hand contact--and that he may have only later identified New Salem and/or Oakham with Arkham in his imagination. And still later recreated it as Salem/Danvers.

According to the *Gazeteer of the State of Massachusetts*, "New Salem was settled principally by families from Middleborough and Danvers." Danvers was, as I mentioned in my earlier article, the true site of the Salem witch trials--although the witch hunt began in Salem. *The History of New Salem* gives 1737 as the town's founding year. That spring, Jeremiah Meacham migrated from Salem to New Salem with his family and built a log cabin. New Salem was incorporated June 15, 1753--quite a few years after Lovecraft's supposed witch descendants fled Salem and nine years before Oakham was incorporated--and was named in honor of Salem, Massachusetts.

My discovery of New Salem as the missing piece to the Arkham Country puzzle had a sequels of sorts. Almost exactly a year to the day after the Ruth Gruber article appeared in the *Boston Globe*, a fascinating letter appeared in the *Maine Sunday Telegram* for October 25, 1987, which would seem to reaffirm my linking of Oakam with Arkham, as well as my larger thesis that the Swift River Valley was the seat of the Miskatonic Valley.

The letter was signed William Hellen McLin, and was in response to an unidentified *Telegram* article which wondered if the Massachusetts coastal town of Ipswich--located between Newburyport and Gloucester--could be the original Dunwich. McLin wrote:

As the holder of a graduate degree from Rhode Island College and a former member of the faculty I can claim some familiarity with Providence and its writer of weird tales. But more than that, I can claim experience as the teacher of a one-room country school in the time-frame of the horror anecdotes in the area about which he was actually writing. This is the Swift River Valley in Massachusetts--not far from Providence--now covered by the waters of the Quabbin Reservoir.

One of his stories, "The Dunwich Horror," fits nicely into Swift River Valley surroundings, if for Dunwich you read Greenwich and for Arkham you read Oakham. Greenwich, Dana and Pelham, Mass., were

all wiped out when the Swift River was choked off by the Windsor dam. It all makes sense to me when I recall the many times I boarded the train for Springfield at Greenwich Plains depot.

McLin apparently never thought through the New Salem possibilities, but it's fascinating to note that, unclouded by knowledge of Lovecraft's frequent assertion that Arkham was inspired by Salem, he recognized the true significance of Oakham. McLin lived in the area at the same time Lovecraft was writing the stories, and his conclusions are highly credible.

Intrigued by McLin's letter, Lovecraft scholar Jason Eckhardt--who brought it to my attention--contacted McLin and received a personal reply in which McLin expanded upon his recollections. McLin recalled the following:

In 1926 I was hired as the teacher of the one-room eight-grade West Hardwick School on the edge of the Swift River Valley in Massachusetts. Springfield was the natural center of the region and I could reach it in three ways: (1) by hiking down into the Valley and taking Athol Branch train at the Greenwich Plains depot (2) by hiking down to Ware and taking the "Toonerville Trolley" of the Springfield Street Railway to Palmer and there changing to a Worcester-Springfield "speed liner" (3) by hiking to Ware and there taking the Palmer-Baldwinsville Branch train to Palmer and there changing to the Boston & Albany main line Boston-Springfield. I used (1) the most as it was the shortest hike. [...] I was located 4 miles from the nearest paved highway or telephone and 5 and one half miles to Ware.

Late in 1926 I joined the Highland Branch of the Springfield YMCA (next door to the Hotel Kimball). One of my finest memories recalls the chimes in the Municipal Center Campanile sounding out in the snow-filled evening air. There was a literary discussion group that met at the "Y" every Friday night. When it was discovered that I knew of HPL and that I was located in West Hardwick, several of the group arranged to drive out 26 miles to visit me and to be shown around to some of the tumble-down farmhouses with a well in the center of the yard and the broken windows stuffed with rags. Any of those places could easily have been the inspiration for "The Dunwich Horror"! We believed then that HPL was touting Ipswich as the locale of his stories because it was well-known that Greenwich, Dana, Enfield, and a part of Pelham were going to be wiped out by the reservoir project. We believed that he felt that if he could throw people off the true trail for a few years the area would be under water and no one could prove that it was the scene in which he laid his tales. Altho' many farm buildings had been allowed to fall to ruin, the owners were very sensitive if anyone made any remarks about them--and the group believed that Lovecraft stood in mortal fear of lawsuits in the matter.

While McLin's suppositions regarding Lovecraft's legal motivations are highly speculative, and the suggestion that Lovecraft himself had put forth Ipswich is puzzling (Lovecraft mentions Ipswich in both "The Thing on the Doorstep" and "The Shadow over Innsmouth" as being in the vicinity of post-1929 Arkham, so perhaps this is what McLin and the as-yet-unseen *Maine Sunday Telegram* article are postulating), his long-held belief that drowned Greenwich is--or was--Dunwich, although anecdotal, is nevertheless compelling. And it harmonizes perfectly with my own independent researches.

McLin also offers a haunting anecdote of one of the lost Swift River Valley towns.

As West Hardwick sat up on the edge of the Swift River Valley, we frequently heard the bell of the village church in the center of Enfield calling the faithful on a Sabbath morning. Twenty-five years later, having moved up in my profession, I took over as Supt. of Schools in Medfield, about 18 miles from the State House in Boston. On the first Sunday morning, I was startled to hear what I thought was the Enfield meeting house bell ringing. I later discovered that it was the Enfield bell which a state engineer who resided in Medfield and who worked on the reservoir project had purchased and presented to the church. He and I spent many happy hours after that discussing Swift River days. He, too, knew HPL and was convinced that Dunwich was Greenwich.

This does not close the book on Arkham Country by any means. There may be more unsuspected geographical or historical facets waiting to be rediscovered. And it should be remembered that Lovecraftian places are not fixed--not even in Lovecraft's own mind. Consider where HPL places Dunwich in a June 1928 letter to James F. Morton, written while he was writing "The Dunwich Horror":

I'm at work on the first new story I've written in a year and a half. It is to be called "The Dunwich Horror", and is so fiendish that Wright may not dare to print it. The scene is in the upper Miskatonic Valley--far, far west of Arkham. (SL II.240)

In reality, Greenwich/Dunwich is east of New Salem. But is west of Oakham--but not by many miles. It might almost be that in this letter, HPL means Salem for Arkham. Yet consider the following letter dated August 4, and written to August Derleth:

... Am now on the 22nd manuscript page of a long short story to be called "The Dunwich Horror". The action takes place amongst the wild domed hills of the upper Miskatonic Valley, far northwest of *Arkham*, & is based on several old New England legends--one of which I heard only last month during my sojourn in Wilbraham. (Ms., State Historical Society of Wisconsin)

Unless one of these two citations is in error, Lovecraft either reconsidered his locales while composing his stories or he was going out of his way to obscure their origins, even in private communications. There is ample evidence for either alternative.

But what now appears abundantly clear is that H. P. Lovecraft's original conception of Arkham Country concerned two side-by-side towns, both settled by fugitive witches. Arkham grew to become a small city with its own college, while Dunwich, like so many Massachusetts hill towns, sunk into degeneracy and decay. But for the Quabbin Reservoir project--which Lovecraft never lived to see achieve fruition--they would have remained that way throughout Lovecraft's body of work. I wonder what kind of story he might have written about Dunwich/Greenwich had he lived to see it covered by outwardly placid waters? The idea of a submerged Dunwich, brooding within a 38-square-mile rural reservoir whose waters slake the thirsts of faraway Bostonians, would no doubt have ignited dark imagery in his keen imagination.

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#### Briefly Noted

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L. Sprague de Camp's *Lovecraft: A Biography* has recently been translated for French readers by Richard D. Nolane, and published by N6O (1988). The attractive hardcover volume, *H. P. Lovecraft: Le Roman de sa Vie*, appears to be a direct translation of de Camp's original work as published by Doubleday, with the exception of having footnotes appear at the end of each paragraph (as opposed to all being placed together at the end of the book as in the original), as well as an updated bibliography compiled by the editor and translator appending de Camp's original listing. The book also features several more illustrations than the original, dustjacket art by Jean-Michel Nicollet, and a new introduction by François Truchard which appropriately comments on the wealth of research which has been done since the original appearance of the volume. While this edition is quite well done, the translator's bibliography is somewhat questionable, leaving out some information, and then incorrectly citing a work as by Lovecraft while in fact it was a bit of humour perpetrated on us by Cryptic Publications some years ago.

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## Reviews

KENNETH W. FAIG, JR. *Tales of the Lovecraft Collectors*. Evanston, IL: the Moshassuck Press, 1989. iv. 77 pp. \$6.50 pb (includes postage). (Order from the author, 2311 Swainwood Drive, Glenview, IL 60025.)

Reviewed by S. T. Joshi.

Readers of this journal know Kenneth W. Faig, Jr, as perhaps the most distinguished--and certainly the most unassuming--of Lovecraft's biographers; a man who brings not only the highest scholarly standards but empathy and psychological insight to the study of Lovecraft the man. Very few, however--only those shrinking members of the Esoteric Order of Dagon amateur press association, where the work under review appeared serially from 1979 to 1988--know of Faig as a fiction writer. It is rather remarkable how many leading Lovecraft scholars have tried their hand--successfully--at fiction: the list begins with Burleson, Murray, Cannon, Price, and Eckhardt, and could be extended further. Even Marc A. Michaud and myself have been known to pen a few tales. I do not know why I found it surprising that Faig should be of this number; but this made my delight all the more pronounced as I read this slim but substantial volume.

*Tales of the Lovecraft Collectors* fits a little anomalously into that already anomalous subgenre where Lovecraft himself is featured as a character: Peter Cannon's *Pulptime* heads the field here, with Richard A. Lupoff's *Lovecraft's Book* a distant second. Faig's contribution is anomalous because Lovecraft himself never actually appears except via letters or accounts of those who have met him. *Tales of the Lovecraft Collectors* is a complex series of four tales unified by the narrative voice of one David Parkes Boynton, a wealthy Fall River industrialist who knew Lovecraft slightly and in fact turns out to be a cousin of Lovecraft's. His diary--"edited" by Faig--tells of his encounter with several Lovecraft collectors, and carries us from Mexico to England to Providence, and along the way we learn several curious tidbits of information: the whereabouts of the ms. of "The Shadow out of Time"; the originals of Lovecraft's Juan Romero and Nyarlathotep; the Druidic leanings of Lovecraft's father; and, most surprising of all, the daughter Lovecraft begat from a pretty Italian girl he met at age nineteen. It is all good fun, made all the more so by Faig's richly textured style--interlaced by many documents and cameo appearances by August Derleth, R. H. Barlow, and other real people--and keen insight into Lovecraft's character and motives. One passage in particular I found deeply moving, where Lovecraft tells of a pestiferous occultist who is maintaining the esoteric "truth" of his work:

"Remember, cousin, the dreams of dreamers leave their property once they have been set down on paper. They can easily become the common stock of charlatans who pretend that dreams are real. But life is real, not dreams. My parents are both dead and my wife and I, I fear, have permanently separated. She wanted a divorce, but a gentleman does not divorce his wife without cause. My dreams and the literary friends who share them are to a large extent my life today. Otherwise, I have only these familiar scenes, my home, and my aunt to relieve my loneliness. So, cousin, grant me liberty of my dreams. If lesser minds abuse them, pay no heed. It will always be so."

All students of Lovecraft will derive enjoyment from this work. The humble format of the publication--reminiscent of such things as Francis T. Laney's *Ah, Sweet Idiocy!*--may deter some readers, and it is to be hoped that it will





### Correspondence

**Donald R. Burleson:**

Congratulations, S. T., on *LS 18*, which I find (my own contribution aside, of course) delightful. Jason's cover art is magnificent! Norman Gayford's piece on Lovecraft and Joyce is fascinating (it's a pity Lovecraft *didn't* think *Ulysses* worth taking the trouble to read), as is Bob Price's treatment of parallels between Lovecraft and Howard. I found J. B. Michel's piece touching, on visiting Lovecraft's home on College Hill as it was when he died. The various reviews of Peters Cannon's Twayne volume seem to cover the ground in a thorough and balanced fashion. I'm glad to see the new space devoted to readers' letters, even though at the outset I find myself twice reviled there!

Darrell Schweitzer declares my piece in *LS 17* on "The Bells" to be "more Structuralist gibberish". While that piece may indeed seem bizarre to some, I think it a pity some people don't take the trouble to inform themselves on what they comment on. Clearly, Darrell makes no distinction between structuralism and post-structuralism (which is, in my view, a little like not distinguishing between pre- and post-Copernican thought), and evidently has no notion of what either movement is all about. I found his "deconstruction" of my byline amusing, but of course such wordplay alone isn't really deconstructive in nature either. (For a real deconstruction, see my piece on "The Terrible Old Man" in *LS 15*.) Not that my "authorial intent" is any more important than anyone else's, but I would venture to say that what the piece on "The Bells" attempts to do is to demonstrate through a work of Lovecraft's (and to demonstrate the adequacy of using Lovecraft for such a demonstration) the playfully uncontainable nature of language. Some folks apparently find that disturbing. Anyway, I leave it to the readers of *LS 18*, and of my piece on Lovecraft and Yeats (as "modernist" as it may be, no doubt to the horror of some), to say whether or not I have "effectively stopped writing", as Darrell says, presumably because I don't write the sort of criticism he likes. Calling things "gibberish" and speaking of whole schools of criticism as a "disease" simply because one knows nothing of them, scarcely would seem worth replying to, and I have to admit I rather wonder why I'm bothering to do so.

Steve Behrends refers to my work as "vacuous and self-indulgent", a sign that (like many others, he admits) I have "jumped aboard the bandwagon of an absurd school of literary criticism". As to vacuity, suffice it to say that it often resides in the mind of the reader, rather than in what is written. I would say that far from being self-indulgent, modernist commentary on literature generally seeks to transcend the bounds of the mere ego and to point up what unbridled and undeniably lasting in a literary text--its open indeterminacies, its sprawling fecundity of signification. Alexander Pope may have said that the critic should "In every work regard the writer's end,/Since none can compass more than they intend", but most modern critics (myself included, obviously) regard this as naive and outmoded twaddle. It is obvious that no one--not author, not reader--can conceivably control the wandering of signifiers through contexts that the author never dreamed of. Are we to stop reading the line "Thou still unravished bride of quietness" because we can't know what Keats intended by "still", without having Keats' letters explaining it, and without consulting other experts to verify the psychologists' competence, etc. etc.? It is astonishing to see people still clinging to the notion that language univocally and transparently represents the clear, ever-self-present, unambiguous, and knowable intent of the author of a literary text. (Try reading *Finnegans Wake* with that attitude toward language and textuality, and see how far you get.) My agenda is to de-ghetto-ise Lovecraft, to make of him, in terms of reputation, not a "horror writer" but a *writer*--and if that means that, to treat him as all worthy writers are now treated, I employ post-structuralist critical theories that people who prefer "fan" criticism find objectionable, then so be it. I could list a few dozen books that certain people could read to find out what's really going on in modern criticism if they were interested. But no doubt they would find the brilliant work of Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, Hillis Miller, Barbara Johnson, Julia Kristeva, etc. to be just more "gibberish".



**Patrick Miller:**

Actually, I hadn't meant to infer by my letter that Will Murray did not think that the story "The Colour out of Space" belonged to the Cthulhu Mythos, just that he seemed to have missed the quote as evidence of the fact, for I did read the article he cites in *LS* 12 and thought he made an invalid point in citing the gaseous intelligence, S'gnae as the same entity since the gaseous cloud mentioned is *violet* in color while of course the colour out of space was a colour unknown on earth. I suppose it could be a related entity, as Mr. Murray says, but certainly by no means the same one.

As to your response, sir, HPL self-admittedly had those stories which he called his "Cthulhu stories" and I insist to all and sundry that his including mention of "The Colour out of Space" among such denizens as Yog-Sothoth and the rest means that he considered this story to be among his "Cthulhu" tales.

*S. T. Joshi responds: Will Murray seems already to have anticipated this objection, in his article "Sources for 'The Colour out of Space'", Crypt of Cthulhu #28 [Yuletide 1984] 3-5: "Considering the almost all-pervasive connectedness of Lovecraft's fiction, it's difficult to disallow any relationship between S'ngac and the 'Colour' entity. Probably they are of the same species. But could they be the very same being? Well, S'ngac is clearly violet, while the thing from the Arkham meteorite is of a color Lovecraft states is impossible to describe. ('It was just a colour--but not any colour of our earth and heavens.') But it could be that the Arkham entity appears to be violet in its own realm--deep space--while it is impossible to perceive when out of its element, as on earth. In this connection, it's worth noting that in the only other place in Lovecraft's fiction when he mentions an impossible-to-describe color, in his revision of Duane Rimel's 'The Tree on the Hill', the 'anomalous color' is 'a nameless blue-violet shade.' If blue-violet is as close as HPL could come to classifying a new color, then the link between the impossibly chromatic Arkham entity and S'ngac is theoretically possible."*

As for Mr Miller's other point, I nowhere recall Lovecraft using the term "Cthulhu stories" to designate any group of his stories; such a designation would be paradoxical in any event, since Cthulhu only appears genuinely in one story. I still believe that dividing up Lovecraft's tales in any but a provisional fashion is counterproductive.

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**Jason C. Eckhardt:**

The recent debate (to give it a mild term) over the deconstructionist critical articles of Donald R. Burleson disturbs me not a little. I know Don and most of the principals in this drama, and like to consider most of them friends or at least friendly acquaintances. Thus it is disturbing for me to see many of these people ganging up on Don (with the exception of Peter Cannon's highly diplomatic letter in *Crypt of Cthulhu* #61½, stating that Don was "casting pearls before swine" by submitting his deconstructions to that magazine, and this market).

I know of this conflict first by hearsay, then by reading some of the letters critical of Don's treatments of Lovecraft's fiction. I must admit that, bombarded with this array of opinions, I began to agree with them--before actually having read any of Don's articles. This wasn't fair to Don, regardless of his detractors' credentials. So I've read a couple of these deconstructions, the one on "The Bells" (*LS* 17) and the most recent one on "Swan Songs" (*LS* 18). Regardless of my own recent exercises in this direction I know almost nothing about formal criticism. This said, however, I *do* know what I like, and I *do* know when something is well-written, and I *do* know when I'm being taught something. These pieces of Don's strike me as a little confused, but ultimately fascinating and informative. I dislike dissecting any form of art over-much, and though Don's pieces do, of course, "deconstruct", I feel that they do not necessarily dissect. They go in an entirely different direction from traditional criticism, and that isn't necessarily bad.

So this is something new and different: we shouldn't dismiss it because of that, but try to see it by new perspectives. My own feeling on Don's deconstructions is that they are a form of creative writing, running a thin, shaky line between criticism and written art. I do not (and here I side with the majority) think that they offer many new insights into HPL's own thinking. But I do enjoy the way these articles sound and I delight in Don's ecstasy with the written word.

Among Don's critics I would like to take issue with Mr. Steve Behrends (whom I must thank for his praise of my artwork [LS 18], and who, I pray, will not think me a back-stabber for what I am about to say!). Behrends states that the deconstructions are "specious, self-involved linguistic masturbation" (LS 18) and that Don is the victim of "trendiness". On the first part, I don't find these specious because of the worth to me, as detailed above: don't read these articles expecting to get from them what you did from traditional criticism. As for "self-involved", since I

consider the articles more exercises in art (which *is* self-involved and self-expressive), I find nothing wrong with that. As for "masturbation", well, most artists will tell you that they do their art first and foremost *for themselves*. On the charge of trendiness: I've known Don Burleson for over ten years now, and considering what a clear-minded, careful, critical thinker he is, I can't believe that he'd be taken in by a mere trend. He is often enthusiastic in an almost boyish sort of excitement; but if this enthusiasm has clouded his judgment (which I find *very* difficult to believe), then it is a sin of innocence, and no cause for this verbal battle.

Then there was the exchange of letters between Don and Bob Knox in *Crypt of Cthulhu*. War in New Hampshire--not a pretty sight. I won't get into this part of the battle very much, except to say that I thought both sides were unnecessarily harsh on each other.

After all these foreworks cooled, though, I was glad to see Don recover his poise and close with a very civil and patient letter in *Crypt* 64. Its appearance, armed with a battery of references and point-by-point replies to all criticism, almost stopped me from writing this letter (I started it before seeing Don's letter). But beyond Don's own well-spoken self-defense I still felt that there remained a couple of things to be said, and now I have said them.

Just a couple more items. Please bear in mind one sad fact about art: once it is out of the hands of the artist, it is out of his/her control. He/she can never predict exactly how each individual is going to interpret that art, and criticism is just another interpretation. Writing presents the critic with problems peculiar to itself, for every word carries an unknown freight of connotation and denotation, meaning and sub-meaning, many common to most people but probably as many unique to the individual reader. What Don Burleson has tried to do is take the work of a man who knew the weight of words, and try to discover at least a fraction of the possibilities behind that writer's own use of them. This is a study in potential, not in actual meaning. A story isn't just sentences, paragraphs, accumulations or words, any more than a drawing is merely its overall composition. Every line of ink affects the ones surrounding it, an inextricable web of information, and the same is true of writing and the words that comprise it. All *knowledge* is connotation: you cannot know one thing with another. Finally, if you don't like an article, don't read it. This field is small enough and often incestuous enough without the added burdens of divisiveness and censorship. These things can only hurt the field of Lovecraft studies.



**Mick Lyons:**

Recently, while cataloging a pile of stock for my next list I came across your editorial in *LS* 17 ["Comments from the Publisher" by Marc A. Michaud] dealing with the EOD. I was rather disturbed by what you had to say on the subject and in particular the links you draw between the EOD and occult related crime. As a member of the EOD and a practicing occultist of many years standing I felt that I should write to you to try to give a different perspective on what you have read in the introductory booklet and obviously in the gutter press.

It's a sad fact that the media is full of crime of all sorts nowadays and as you mention occult related crime is occasionally to be found (obviously more in the US than over here [England] if you see it DAILY) as are all other kinds. I think it rather obvious though that in its eternal quest for dramatic headlines the media tends to grasp upon any occult connection, however tenuous, and blow it up out of all proportion: The amount of any genuine occult link in crime is very minor. Try comparing it with the number of crimes with, for instance, racial prejudice backgrounds, Moslem backed terrorist killings, or crimes in the name of Christianity against non-Christians in the bible-belt of the US, to put it into its true perspective.

Contrary to what you seem to believe, occultism (a term that covers a wide spectrum of belief) is neither negative nor violent. I have run Leeds Occult Society for four years and am in touch with many occultists both in the UK and the rest of the world. In my experience occultists in general are nicer people than most due, possibly, to a degree of self-knowledge that many people do not have. . . "Man Know Thyself" is a fundamental part of Magical practice. Our bad image arises from religious propaganda in the past and present for the most part, but also much to my regret horror books have done little to help our cause as they continue to give people a warped idea of our practices and unfortunately, as most people know no better, they believe what they read, however lurid.

The notorious secrecy of occultists is also partly to blame for the common picture of us as robed and cowed evildoers. In fact, the main reason that most occultists keep themselves and their identities private is to avoid the persecution that usually occurs when people find out that your beliefs are different to theirs. An example of this occurred over here last year: A middle aged single woman, living in Berkshire, was found out to be a "witch" by a local fundamentalist Christian group who promptly called on her and demonstrated their Christian charity by beating her up with baseball bats. Is this an "occult related crime"? Another good reason and one that is almost as important is

that keeping a low profile means it's harder for the loonies who are attracted to the image that occultism has in the popular mind to find you. A probable example of this type are the kids who rang you up to find out which spell to use from the Necronomicon. You found this alarming. Why? Many teenagers believe politicians are honest, God is a bearded vertebrate up in the sky and masturbation gives you spots. . . . They grow out of it. I personally feel it's a testimony to HPL's skill as a writer.

As to the people who don't grow out of it . . . Well, that's not occultism, it's merely delusion and the EOD vets all prospective candidates to weed out this type.

Now on to the EOD itself: I can confirm that we are both having a laugh on you and being serious at the same time, inasmuch as you have to have a sense of humour when you study magic or you can easily end up taking yourself seriously and that's fatal! What we are is a Worldwide group of individuals drawn together by an interest in the occult, HPL and in associated "Darkside" imagery. We include in our ranks artists, poets and writers as well as occultists. Indeed more often than not members are both occultists and dabblers in the creative arts (as am I). HPL was an interesting writer to us for exactly the same reasons that he is found interesting by millions of readers: He was a great stylist who had the rare ability to get his ideas down on paper in a powerful and entertaining way while maintaining their essential purity. More specifically our interest on the magical side lies in his basing his best works on his DREAMS. Any occultist whose brain is not up his backside will tell you that magic is all in the mind. That is not to say that it is spurious, but rather that it stems from the unconscious and uses the symbolic language of the subconscious.

I should make it clear that we do not believe in the absolute existence of Cthulhu and His mates, but we do find HPL's "mythos" a useful paradigm in gaining access to the deeper, non-human (by which I mean primal or non-logical) areas of the subconscious. Likewise we do not believe HPL to have been a prophet, but we do recognise that he showed the way, in a sense, to a new model of the "inner universe" that suits us as individuals with "Darkside" interests to a tee. The Surrealists also recognised this of him.

The "horror" of HPL's stories (and therefore their effectiveness) stems from the clash of the human mind with forces that are huge, alien and totally beyond understanding. This the human mind turns into an "alien evil". The symbolic link between this concept and that of the ego facing up to the vastness of the unconscious--the not-ego, and its implications for the human self-image are obvious I think: Thus the symbolic link within the EOD of the terms "Extraterrestrial" and the "inner-mind". In dealing with these concepts your "funny dreams" become all important in the magical work of self analysis and integration . . . I'm sure Jung would have agreed with me as indeed would HPL, at least on the importance of dreams to him.

I must assure you that we have no desire to blacken the name of HPL and indeed I don't see how we could. However neither do we wish to treat him as a sacred cow whose every utterance was "of gold". As we see it it's his ideas that are important.

On the subject of the EOD booklet you've seen: Indeed we "bozos" do have the right to say what we like, just as you have the right to interpret it as you like. However, I'm afraid that if you insist on treating everything you read as the literal truth that does not make US stupid. Magic and mysticism are arts (for want of a better word) that deal with concepts that everyday language cannot express due to their abstract and intuitive nature; hence much writing in the field of the occult tends to be symbolic and make much use of allegory. The rather mystical verbiage in the booklet sometimes makes me cringe with embarrassment I must admit, but not with fear. It is only meant to be given to interested parties who can see beyond the superficial glamour to what lies beneath. You, I'm afraid make the common mistake of someone who knows nothing about occultism: You believe that what you read is literally true. In fact this is not the case. The EOD booklet should in fact be read with a degree of humour and a knowledge of the use of occult symbolism. For example the passage you quote about "fear and loathing" merely says that ordinary folks are put off by the superficial trappings and images of occultism, but those people who are interested enough and willing to work at it can get great benefits out of using these images to explore their unconscious depths and face up to the weird symbolic entities and imagery encountered therein. This does not mean that we are psychopaths as far as I can see; only that you don't know a thing about the study of the occult.

Frankly I was very disappointed when I read your editorial. As a devotee of one of the fathers of the horror genre you must have come across people who hold the view that to read a horror book is corrupting etc etc without actually ever having read any. Well the same point of view is held by many people concerning the occult, including obviously yourself. You seem perfectly willing to condemn the EOD out of hand and in print on the basis of a glance at a booklet you don't understand and what you have read in the papers.

[...]

## The H. P. Lovecraft Centennial Conference

The John Hay Library, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island

18-19 August 1990

To mark H. P. Lovecraft's centennial on 20 August 1990, the John Hay Library proudly announces a series of events, presented free of charge, and aimed at as wide an audience as possible, in honor of the great Providence, Rhode Island, author of horror and fantasy.

While still in the early planning stages, the program already features a series of panels boasting premier Lovecraft experts from around the world, a major exhibition of Lovecraft manuscripts, books, and associated items, an art exhibit by top artists featuring works influenced by Lovecraft, as well as walking tours hosted by Henry L. P. Beckwith, author of *Lovecraft's Providence* (Donald M. Grant, 1986).

The John Hay Library is the most appropriate sponsor of these centennial events, as it holds the largest collection in the world of Lovecraft's manuscripts and printed works.

Inexpensive dormitory rooms on the beautiful Brown University campus will be available to those attending for a nominal fee of approximately \$25-30.

In order to better prepare the program, estimate attendance, and also create a mailing list for updates, we'd like to hear from all interested in attending. Further information about registration and room reservations will be mailed in the coming months (no later than January 1990).

Please send all inquiries care of Necronomicon Press, 101 Lockwood Street, West Warwick, Rhode Island, 02893, USA.



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